Recontextualisation in museum displays: refracting discourses over time

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Abstract

This research investigates the representation of people in museums, focusing on the San, South Africa's first nation. Using a multimodal social semiotic framework, it analyses three exhibitions of the San that were mounted over a period of a hundred years in a natural history museum from 1911 to the present. The research takes into consideration the socio-political background in which the exhibitions were designed, and examines how this manifests in the ways in which the San were represented. The analysis surfaces three dominant discourses, namely evolutionary, ecological as well as a discourse of transformation. These discourses are complex and always in dialogue with one another. The research entailed working with and analysing photographs and drawing on secondary texts of two exhibitions that are no longer open to the public, and analysing an existing exhibition. The data analysis was framed by the semiotic principles of recontextualisation as posited by Bezemer and Kress (2008): selection, social relations and arrangement. Selection refers to the choice of meaning materials for an exhibition. Arrangement refers to the decisions made in the display of the meaning materials (including layout, framing, and foregrounding), and social relations pertain to the social repositioning that takes place in the process of recontextualisation. The research showed how discourses shifted across time, but that dominant discourses such as an evolutionary discourse persisted through the ages and the various exhibitions.

By analysing exhibitions of the San against the political backdrop of colonialism, apartheid and post-apartheid this research contributes to an understanding of colonial museums and their exhibitions. It provides suggestions to South African museum practitioners dealing with colonial collections on how to bring a decolonial perspective to exhibitions. The insights gained through this research may enable museum professionals to better understand meaning making and representation in museum display and to contribute to current debates on representation, including ways in which dominant discourses are reflected and refracted in museums. The dialogue between discourses and traces of discourse is of interest within the museum context as well as other contexts of transformation. The research shows that it is possible to map a re-imagining of museum display on the three principles of recontextualisation – selection, arrangement and social relations – in order to see what forms transformation in museum display could take.

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Overview

"This research focuses on the San, South Africa's first nation, and their representation in three museum exhibitions. Its aim is to show the history of one group of indigenous people in a South African context, where colonial occupation and apartheid have led to the annihilation of the San and their hunter-gatherer way of life. It bears on the similar yet importantly different histories of indigenous people in different parts of the world under colonial rule, and their representations in museums. In doing so it enables clearer understandings and articulations of different colonial histories and their representation in museums." (p. 9, the opening paragraph to the introduction)

The research takes into consideration the socio-political background in which the exhibitions were designed, and examines how this influenced the way in which the San were represented. Briefly, the background is of colonial occupation, followed by the formalisation of apartheid, and then the advent of the democratic era as the outcome of centuries of struggle. Three semiotic principles, namely selection, social relations and arrangement underpin the theoretical framework, which makes it possible to distinguish the dominant discourses that are manifest in the three exhibitions.

1.2 Context for research

In this section a brief introduction to the museum and the selected exhibitions is given. This is followed by an introduction to how the colonial context impacts on the museum and how current debates about decoloniality are important to this study. A brief history of the San is given to provide context for why the focus is significant.

Museums such as the Iziko South African Museum in Cape Town developed out of a specifically European historical and social practice. They are part of an African landscape in complex ways that reflect their origins in European imperialism, yet still carry forward an ideal of preservation of valued cultural artefacts and public education (Davison 1991, 1992, 1998; Bennett 1995, 1997, 1998, 2004, 2006; Hooper-Greenhill 2007). This museum was founded in 1825 by decree of Lord Charles Somerset, colonial administrator and governor of the Cape Colony from 1814 to 1826.

It was intended to house collections of South African origin. However, as a result of donations, bequests and purchases, collections from all over the world are to be found here. By the middle of the twentieth century the museum was in possession of collections of natural history and social history, which included a large collection of colonial objects dating back to early European settlements in South Africa. The more recent aim to become part of the African landscape is reflected in the mission statement of Iziko Museums. The mission statement reads: 'Iziko Museums of Cape Town are African museums of excellence that empower and inspire people to respect our diverse heritage' (Iziko Museums of Cape Town leaflet 2003).

The exhibitions that are the focus of this research will be analysed to show how the San have been represented within the social and political contexts of relatively recent times. The exhibitions also reflect the authoritative nature of museums and the power invested in museums through their exhibitions. The three moments are briefly introduced below.

The first exhibition of the San casts was opened in the 1911. The casts of a number of San were displayed in the centre of a gallery in a large display case, treated as 'specimens', in line with Darwinian scientific thinking of the time. The next exhibition, the diorama, was opened to the public in 1959. In this exhibition San casts were displayed in an idealised late nineteenth-century camp scene and again not placed in the current context in which they were living, which was mostly in abject poverty and in servitude, as discussed in chapter 5. This exhibition was enhanced through a number of display boards in the late 1980s in order to contextualise the display of these casts in a diorama. The diorama, an exhibition which features casts of both animals and humans and a painted backdrop, was closed to the public in 2001, at the time transformation was taking place in the museum sector and in line with thinking about the socio-political transformation that South Africa has been undergoing as a nation since the official demise of apartheid. The current exhibition, opened in 2003, titled */Qe – the power of rock art* aims to place the San in a social and historical context through the use of images, written text and by drawing on the Bleek and Lloyd archival material[1] and providing quotations from this body of work, again in line with debates on transformation taking place at the time. The focus on rock art was chosen as it embodies the rich spiritual and cosmological life of the San which was not shown in any displays of the San before.

1 The Bleek and Lloyd archival material consists of 13000 pages of testimonies by San informants, and recorded by Wilhelm Bleek, a linguist, and Lucy Lloyd.

Next I briefly discuss colonialism and decolonisation as these notions have informed the above-described museum exhibitions. When I started this research the renewed call for transformation in universities, in particular for what came to be referred to as decolonisation, had not yet taken place. The student protests started in 2015 at the university at which I work, beginning with a call for the removal of the statue of Cecil John Rhodes, a colonial figure that became representative of colonial thought and knowledge. During these protests in 2015 and 2016, it was clear that the call for the decolonisation of higher education institutions applied to other institutions such as museums, which are educational institutions first and foremost. In many instances, museums house colonial collections and displays, and have particular ways of representing people and objects, which continue to be contentious.

This study commences with an analysis of the representation of the San during colonial occupation and ends with an analysis of an exhibition mounted in post-apartheid South Africa. Notions of colonialism inform ways in which the San were represented. As noted, the first exhibition of the San was mounted in 1911 when South Africa was a British colony, the second in 1959 just before the country became independent and the final one in 2003 in post-apartheid South Africa when transformation in museums was beginning to take place. The study shows that museum exhibitions, particularly of indigenous people and their material culture, represent and communicate the discourses of the colonial enterprise, and that these representations need to be opened up for debate during this moment of decolonisation.

According to Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013:13):

> Colonialism is a historical process that culminated in the invasion, conquest and direct administration of Africa by states like Spain, Portugal, Britain and France for the purposes of enhancing their prestige in the empires, for exploitation of natural and human resources and export of excess population for the benefit of the empire.

The process of colonialism described by Ndlovu-Gatsheni was also enacted in South Africa. However, formal colonisation ended in 1994 when the first democratic elections were held and the current democratic government came into power. The end of colonialism thus came long after the country became independent when British rule ended in 1961; segregation, a feature of colonialism, became lawfully enacted early in the twentieth century under apartheid rule and remained in place

until the 1990s when the laws that enforced segregation were disestablished prior to the first democratic government coming into being.

Colonialism in South Africa is considered to have begun in 1652 when the Dutch settlers arrived, where they first encountered the Khoesan[2] inhabitants. The Cape Colony remained under Dutch rule until 1795 when it fell to the British Crown before reverting to Dutch rule in 1803 and again to British occupation in 1806 (South African History Online 2017). South Africa became a union in 1910, remaining a British dominion. This ended in 1961, with the Republic of South Africa being established. South Africa, along with Mozambique, Angola and Zimbabwe, however, differs from other African colonised countries in that settler colonialism was imposed. In South Africa, some of the characteristics of settler colonialism, including legally enacted segregation, were formally ended only with the overthrowing of the apartheid-colonial political system in 1994. After World War II when many African countries were ending colonialism, apartheid colonialism was reinvigorated by the Nationalist government when they came to power in 1948. South Africa is the last country in Africa to be freed from colonialism (Reddy 2016:4–7; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013:13). Legislated segregation on racial lines underpinned apartheid colonialism until the laws that enacted segregation were repealed, yet apartheid colonialism continued to exist in South Africa.

Whilst not discussing colonialism as such in this research it is important to take cognisance of the ways in which colonialism's racist, violent and brutal characteristics can be seen in the way in which the San were treated and represented in the first colonial exhibition. The colonial system is based on racial difference and incorporates the racism of exploitation and its inherited justifications (Nyamnjoh 2016:3). Settler colonialism is a distinct type of colonialism that functions through the replacement of indigenous populations with an invasive settler society (Verancini 2015). The settler colonial state monitored the racialised social relations of settler-colonial domination. Apartheid, which Reddy (2016), argues was borne out of settler colonialism, is a paradigmatic case of racial violence and separation. Apartheid is focused on Afrikaner-influenced 'racial' practice, although racist attitudes prevailed from the beginning when the Cape was first colonised. This was reflected in the way the San were treated which is discussed in chapters 4 and 5. Reddy (2016) notes that in a settler colonial situation the world is divided in two – the 'native' and the coloniser are made into

2 Khoesan is a unifying name for the first nations people of Southern Africa, combining the Khoekhoen and the San. The term 'San' is generally used to refer to hunter-gatherers whilst 'Khoekhoen' refers to pastoralists. I use the term 'San' to refer to the hunter-gatherers as it is generally considered to be more respectful than the use of the alternative term 'Bushman'.

particular racialised subjects that are assigned identities as either black or white. In settler colonialism's compartementalised worlds 'two different species' are created. 'Natives' are dehumanised as 'bestial' or 'animal' (Fanon 1993:32) and reason, civil society and the enlightened person symbolised the coloniser. The settler-colonial situation made a racialised identity possible with a corresponding ideology of white superiority, carried through into apartheid ideology. Conventional conceptions of apartheid emphasise 'racial' inclusion and exclusion. Strict 'racial' separation was the apartheid solution to the long-term settler colonial issue of a small white minority living amongst a large black majority.

Decolonisation is a more complex term to define. On the one hand, it refers to the formal political process of withdrawal from colonial occupation after independence. 'Decolonisation was a term that was used to describe the withdrawal of direct colonialism from the colonies as well as the struggles waged against those empires reluctant to do so' (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013:13). Ndlovu-Gatsheni definition states that decolonisation followed the formal end of colonial rule in Africa by imperial powers in the post-World War II era. Mazrui (cited in Greffrath 2016:165), makes the claim that decolonisation is not the winning of formal independence, but the 'collapse of the colonial state itself, the cruel and bloody disintegration of colonial structures', and that liberation and decolonisation cannot be equated. He argues that the legacy of colonialism can only be truly abolished when all remnants of colonialist structures, power and domination are purged.

> Decolonisation did not succeed in removing coloniality and it survived the end of direct colonialism and in post-colonies coloniality continues to affect the lives of people after colonialism and administrative apartheid have been abolished, as in the case of South Africa (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013:11).

In this definition, decolonisation entails the dismantling of the interests of the colonised. Beyond this formal process of breaking down structures of power, it starts with a change of the consciousness of the colonised. The goal of decolonisation is to 'bring the human out of an imprisoned object' (Reddy 2016:69, 77). This emphasises the notion that decolonisation is not an event that happens once at a given time and place but is an ongoing process (Mbembe 2015:15), seen today in the call for the decolonisation of institutions of higher education. This is a 'softer' interpretation of decolonising that acknowledges the ongoing work of identifying and challenging the power relations that enabled colonial imperialism, and that linger on in contemporary life.

I argue that museums are conduits for colonial discourse and suggest that, like institutions of higher learning, museums should be aware of the current call for decolonisation and consider how displays may contribute to what Ndlovu-Gatsheni points to: the ongoing power of coloniality and colonial discourse to reproduce patterns of epistemic violence in the way indigenous identities are represented.

1.2.1 The effect of colonialism on the San

Next the San are briefly introduced to provide further context for the study. The extermination of the San needs to be understood against the background of colonial expansion and violence, and the colonial ideology with regard to violence against the indigenous inhabitants. The San were exploited and killed, directly and indirectly, leading to their near-extermination and the belief of the colonists that they were 'going extinct'.

Writing about the violence of the colonial enterprise the following lament represents the words of a dying San shaman who was shot by a trekboer (a migrant colonial farmer):

> … People were those who broke for me the string …
> Therefore, the place became like this to me on account of it,
> Because the string was that which had broken for me …
> The place does not feel like home as the country used to feel …
> For [it] feels as if it stood open (empty) before me
> Because the string was broken for me …
> For, things continue to be unpleasant to me;
> I do not hear the ringing sound I used to hear …
> I do not feel any thing which vibrates in me
>
> (From *Heaven's Things: A story of the /Xam*,[3] Pippa Skotnes)

This lament is a reconstruction from … with the 'broken string' a powerful image of the profound loss of identity as a result of European occupation. Adhikari (2010) has written an authoritative account of this history which he refers to as genocide. By the start of European colonisation in 1652 the San had largely been displaced to drier and more rugged interior areas by the Khoekhoen pastoralists and the Bantu-speaking cultivators who had migrated to the area in which they lived around two

3 The /Xam are San who speak the language /Xam.

thousand years before. From about 1740 the colonial trekboers advanced inland rapidly, meeting resistance from the San and Khoesan. It was during this time that the trekboers, with the help of the colonial Dutch East India Company government, began an exterminatory military offensive against the San.

Under Dutch colonial rule the trekboers, with the advantage of their horses and firearms, severely disrupted the lives of the San. They were in competition for the same environmental resources – water, game, grazing and access to land. The San found that they were denied access to watering places as the trekboers occupied springs and water holes. The livestock of the trekboers muddied and contaminated water supplies and trampled on the plants on which the San subsisted. They decimated herds of game, which was a primary source of food for the San and their stock consumed the grazing on which game fed. Game usually followed a similar migrating pattern as to that of herding, resulting in a growing scarcity of game, which left the hungry San little option but to raid trekboer livestock. In addition to damaging the subsistence base of the San, the natural environment, which was fundamental to their spirituality, was being desecrated and game such as the eland, central to San belief systems, were being eradicated. As explored in chapter 6, the San have a deeply spiritual connection to the natural environment and features of the landscape were endowed with sacred importance and ritual significance. It is only as a last resort thus that the San abandoned their domains. The attachment of the San to their territory was of such an intensely spiritual nature that 'to lose the land was to lose literally everything. Surrender to the colonists in combat was not an option for many San men' (Adhikari 2010:34–46).

The San reacted to the trekboer incursions by raiding and killing trekboer livestock, destroying crops and attacking farmsteads and poisoning water holes. The colonists reacted to this aggression with individual acts of slaughter and massacre, inflicting terrible cruelty on the San. The trekboers regularly went on commando as they believed there was no alternative but to eliminate and contain the threat caused by the San.

In these commando raids, San men were killed instantly as they were considered a threat and of no economic value. Women and children were often also massacred and those not killed were taken into the trekboer households as servants. Female captives held extra value as their offspring could augment the trekboer's labour supply. The effacement of San identities formed a significant part of the genocidal process, in particular with the child captives for whom the hunter-gatherer lifestyle would not have been formative. Racism, inherent in the colonial ethos, played a big role in the

inhumane treatment of the San and the extreme violence perpetrated against them. The San were judged to be on the lowest rung of the racial hierarchy in accordance with the scientific discourse of this time. The dehumanisation of the San justified for the trekboers the occupation of San land, enslaving and killing them. Under Dutch rule the process of eradication made it impossible for San society to reproduce itself biologically and culturally or to subsist as foragers (Adhikari 2010:52–53, 59).

That the trekboers hunted the San as 'vermin', and often without provocation, was commonplace in the nineteenth century. Publications about the Cape Colony and in popular publications from 1830 (De Prada-Samper 2012:173) provide evidence of this. Whilst neither a publication or popular publication, the Reverend, Dr Baron Theodore van Wurmb, wrote this in his diary on 7 May 1830:

> At the moment the Bushmen (San) are carrying out the most terrible atrocities in the surroundings, as because of great drought in the country, they have nothing to eat. Alas, the local Europeans (farmers) are themselves the cause of these atrocities because they essentially treat the Bushmen as wild animals and every local farmer boasts about how he had shot dead many of these people. The farmers organise common hunting parties against the Bushmen; and if Bushmen come to a farm and request food, they are given nothing, but rather all their goods are taken away and they are driven off with sticks or forced to perform the farmer's work (Ross 1994:109).

On 11 May 1830 Wurmb wrote the following:

> We hear more and more of the robberies and murder of the Bushmen… Europeans who live here and who treat them like dogs and shoot them dead whenever they can get hold of a single one (Ross 1994:110).

Testimonies from the /Xam (a San group) abound with references to people killed or maimed while working for farmers. This is exemplified by the story told of a young labourer who was tied to a wagon and kicked to death by the farmer who had accused him of stealing a sheep (De Prada-Samper 2012:174).

Further testimonies of San included this description:

> They surrounded the place during the night, spying the Bushmen's fires. At daybreak the firing commenced, and lasted until the sun was up a little way.

> The commando party loaded and fired, and reloaded many times before they finished. A great many people (women and children) were killed that day. The men were absent. Only a few little children escaped, and they were distributed amongst the people composing the commando. The women threw up their arms, crying for mercy, but no mercy was shown to them. Great sin was perpetrated that day (De Prada-Samper 2012:183).

The official commando activity continued, albeit only to act against San aggression, and so did the killing and the capture of the San. Colonial hunting parties traversed San land depleting the game and depriving the San of a major source of food. Stock farmers continued to encroach on the land of the San, compromising the ability of the San to subsist off the land. Throughout the nineteenth century many San succumbed to starvation and dehydration as a result of their loss of access to traditional sources of food and water (Adhikari 2010:69).

In spite of a relatively accommodating British colonial policy that followed Dutch rule, the San in the Cape Colony continued to be exterminated during the course of the nineteenth century through an incremental process of encroachment on their land, enforced labour incorporation and periodic massacres. A few bands of San managed to survive in areas of the Kalahari Desert in the north of the country. San society in the Cape Colony was destroyed. Today there are approximately 100 000 San people across southern Africa. Most work as farm labourers, live unemployed in marginal settlements and work in their own income generation projects. Some run nature conservancies, some have no income other than small pensions from the state, and some still hunt and gather (South African San Institute: http://www.progressproject.eu/partners-advisors/301-south-african-san-institute-sasi/).

This section has provided context in a tragic narrative of the dispossession of the San in which the San were stripped of power, voice and dignity. It also surfaces some of the challenges of researching representation of a people who have systematically been stripped of a voice, and the way in which they were represented in a museum. The role of museums in interpreting the San and indigenous people generally is important and complex, as a result of the impact of colonialism and the apartheid regime and the power invested in the colonial powers and discourses as well as that of the apartheid.

Museums are centres of study and research, and have become part of what Genoways refers to as the learning industry – they are considered to be educational spaces (2006:1–3, 135). The construction of museum exhibitions necessitates choices of

objects, how objects are related to each other as well as words and images, producing powerful visual narratives. Through these practices, perceptions are shaped and meanings are constructed. Narratives and values represented in museums express power and knowledge (Genoways 2006:23, 236). The study employs a multimodal social semiotic framework to look at the ways in which museum displays reflect and refract dominant discourses circulating in society, in particular the way in which knowledge and objects are contextualised and recontextualised, against particular socio-political backdrops. As soon as artefacts are removed from their place in situ and moved to a museum, be it a store room or on display, these objects are recontextualised and take on different meanings. The research aims to enable museum practitioners and museum educators to better understand meaning making and representation in museum display, and to show the importance of understanding museum practice in a socio-political context, including colonial era displays.

1.3 Research questions

The following research questions make it possible to focus on the visual, verbal, tactile and spatial elements of San exhibitions over a period of time in order to reflect on representation in a socio-political context, informed by the ideologies of colonialism and decolonisation. These questions enable the researcher to examine the implications for exhibition and display design, museum practice and education in museums.

1) How does the recontextualisation of artefacts across historically situated exhibitions in a natural history museum discursively refract and construct the San?
2) How can representation of the San in exhibitions make it possible to understand representation of people in museums more broadly?
3) What are the implications of viewing representation in this way for museums and the design of museum displays and exhibitions?

An additional concern emerged as I read more and did the analysis of the three exhibitions of the San. It became clear that what I identify as an evolutionary discourse – a dominant view that considered people to be at different points of development on the evolutionary scale – was not only manifest in the first exhibition mounted in 1911, but also in the diorama and the current exhibition *(/Qe – the power of rock art)* – despite these two exhibitions being mounted in 1959 and 2003 respectively when this discourse was no longer the dominant way of thinking. Compartmentalised, racially

inflected, categorisation was a key feature of the evolutionary discourse. Thus, an underlying question is how and why this racialised classification manifests in the display of the San in both the first exhibition and the diorama, and remains to a lesser extent in the current exhibition.

1.4 Rationale for research

Museums with ethnographic collections represent people, mostly indigenous people, and their material culture artefacts. Material culture artefacts were first collected by early travellers who showed these artefacts in privately owned cabinets of curiosities. Imperialism brought with it the collection of ethnographic artefacts from colonised countries, which were displayed in the early public museums, both in Europe and in colonised countries. The Iziko South African Museum, founded in 1825, in a country colonised by both the Dutch and the British, is a natural history museum which also includes ethnographic displays. The fact that only indigenous people are displayed alongside natural history specimens in this museum has long been problematic, in particular as the San were represented in a diorama as living in close harmony with nature, akin to animals which were also displayed in dioramas.

Ethnographic museums, along with large national museums, were founded in the nineteenth century. The term 'ethnographic' was based on the notion that man-kind's differences were not only physical as anthropological collections showed, but also cultural, and that the physical and the cultural are linked (Rein 2012:197). The development of ethnographic collections traced the history of anthropological enquiry (https:www.iziko.org.za/static/page/indigenous-knowledge-ethnography). Ethnographic museums and displays are problematic and controversial as they represent mostly indigenous people, often objectifying and rendering them less than human. Ethnographic collections very often began as exotic collections of 'the other'. The relationship between indigenous and non-indigenous scholars, their methodologies, goals and aspirations, remains contentious, given that indigenous groups, for example in Australia, still sometimes see museums as a product of European thought. Early ethnographic displays were made based on the Western knowledge of the museum curators, often informed by ethnographic and anthropological research, and not informed by firsthand knowledge of the indigenous people that are being represented. Indigenous knowledge and interests were not represented in these displays, and were not central as they should be when people are being represented in museum display. The authorial voice was not that of the indigenous people who were being represented, but Western.

By analysing the exhibition of the San against the political backdrop of colonialism, during which time, as discussed above, the San were exterminated, and post-apartheid, this research contributes to an understanding of colonial museums and their displays. The research thus contributes to the debates on transformation and argues for the necessity for a decolonial lens to be brought to South African museum practice. This research will provide South African museum practitioners dealing with colonial collections with a way of thinking about how they could bring insights from decolonial thought to their collections. This can make a contribution to the understanding of collection and display policies.

To sum up, this research aims to understand the representation of indigenous people against a socio-political backdrop across three exhibitions. In particular it looks towards understanding why museums and, in this instance, a natural history museum that includes the display of indigenous people, are problematic in and of themselves because of who is represented and how they are represented, as well as how the politics of particular eras influenced the representation of indigenous people in museum display and how the dominant discourses of these eras became manifest in the exhibitions. The research asks how the recontextualisation of the San and their material culture artefacts across historically situated exhibitions construct the San and how the representation of the San across these three exhibitions make it possible to understand representation more broadly. It aims to understand what the implications for the design of museum displays are when representation is viewed in this way. It also aims to understand how the evolutionary discourse with race at its core is manifest in all three exhibitions.

Whilst studies have been done in museums using a social semiotic multimodal framework, many of these have concentrated on visitors' interaction with and interpretation of museum displays (Lindstrand and Insulander 2012; Bezemer, Diamantopoulou, Jewitt, Kress and Mavers 2012; Insulander 2007; Diamantopoulou 2007, Ravelli and McMurtrie 2016). These studies have not necessarily shown how different discourses are refracted through displays over a period of time.

This study has introduced a relatively new approach, that of multimodal social semiotics, with a focus methodologically on a specific semiotic principle: recontextualisation, selection and arrangement.

Fundamental to museum practice is that artefacts are dislocated as they are separated from their place of origin, moved to museum collections where they are classified and, if selected, they are put on display. The meaning of artefacts is changed in this process which has significant implications. A social semiotic multimodal

framework has been chosen as it resonates with the site of the study and enables the answering of the research question focused on the ways in which recontextualisation refracts and constructs the discourses surrounding the San.

The use of a multimodal social semiotic framework made it possible to set out an investigation of three exhibitions to discuss representation in a colonial context. This research started out using a multimodal social semiotic framework, which was refined in the light of other fields of enquiry such as museums studies (crucial for the site of this study) and postcolonialism. Postcolonial studies helped with the analysis of display in a colonial and postcolonial context in a way that a purely multimodal social semiotic framework could not do. It provided historical context. By refining this framework through the incorporation of postcolonialism it has further developed it, in so doing contributing to the field of multimodality. This development is particularly apt in museum studies and specifically for museums that are colonial in origin and house and display colonial collections. A multimodal social semiotic framework was essential to do this study and drawing on discourse analysis added depth which makes a unique contribution to the field of museum studies.

I argue that this study thus makes a contribution to both museum studies and multimodality as it sets museum exhibitions against a socio-political context, in so doing highlighting the importance of not seeing museum practice and display in isolation. The multimodal analysis of the three exhibitions provides a framework for how these exhibitions came to represent the San. Whilst it focuses on the representation of the San, the research can apply to the analysis of other representations, and particular colonial museums and their displays.

The use of a multimodal social semiotic framework made it possible to analyse the exhibitions that form the focus of this study. The analysis of the exhibitions and the use of texts on colonialism and postcolonialism showed both the influence of colonialism on museums established during the colonial era, their collection and classification practices as well as their display practices. It has also made it possible to explore what a decolonised display could look like and to pose questions that suggest ways in which decolonial thinking could be brought to representation in museums, using the principles of recontextualisation.

1.5 Personal background to the research: a history and some challenges

What follows is a brief account of how I came to research representation in museums and a reflection of my positionality during this research. I started this research as someone who had little experience of the lived lives of the San. At the end of the

research, whilst familiar with museum practice through working in a museum, and having a knowledge of the San through my interest in and admiration of rock art, and an understanding of the deep spirituality in their everyday lives, I could not claim to have shared the experience of the San. Given the contentious nature of the research topic, it was essential to be sensitive to the research material and to be aware of my own subjectivity and beliefs and to maintain a critical awareness of the relationship between the research subject and my personal process of inquiry as well as my positionality (Berger 2013). This was particularly challenging when researching and analysing the first two exhibitions as the political belief systems rendered the San as 'other', thus dehumanising the San and leading to immense suffering. There are sensitivities around the museum specialists who researched, designed and mounted the exhibitions, and around the practices such as racism that can be seen in the way the San were represented. The research is also contentious as it shows clearly how political, evolutionary and ecological views became associated with the museum through what is depicted and represented in their exhibitions.

Doing the research and writing on the topic was difficult not only because of the sensitivity of the research material – which speaks directly to the absence of the research subjects as a result of the genocide of the San – but because it was necessary to ask how I relate to this material with the knowledge I had. Also, it was important not to work within and repeat the very discourses that made it possible for the San to be viewed and treated as 'other' and to be stripped of their humanity and denied their history. It became increasingly clear as the research unfolded that patterns of race-based classification underlie the three exhibitions and that this remains an issue across all three exhibitions. The context within which I was working during the latter part of the research process raised another set of challenges that could not be planned for. In 2015 the university where I work was shaken by the student-led protests known as the Rhodes Must Fall movement, which raised the issue of racism at universities and called for the decolonisation of the curriculum. The Rhodes Must Fall movement targeted the epistemic racism at institutions of higher learning. Writing about 'race' as a white academic was particularly difficult, and made me understand just how much of an outsider I was and remained throughout this research. Given the contentious topic, the issues around representation and the fact that 'race' is central to this research made me feel a tremendous responsibility about writing about the representation of the San and to not re-enact the same highly problematic patterns of representation I am critical of in the exhibitions.

I worked at the site of this research, the Iziko South African Museum, for thirteen

years from 1989 to 2003 during the time when transformation in museums was beginning to take place, as formal apartheid was coming to an end. I was first based in the education department and then in the public programmes department where I was responsible for all publications and worked on exhibition teams. Whilst working at this museum I also taught adult literacy classes in the evenings in Langa, a township in Cape Town. I had a deep interest in education, in particular adult education, and aimed to contribute to adult education for those denied a primary and secondary education under apartheid. It was estimated at the time that about 15 million black adults – over one third of the population – was illiterate and had four years or less schooling (ANC Education Department 1994).

While appreciating the educational role that could be played by museums, I remained frustrated throughout my tenure that more was not done, as the possibilities for educational interventions were so many and so rich. I saw the opportunity for using the materials on display, in particular the material culture artefacts of indigenous people, to teach adult literacy classes in a way that could have meaning and significance for adult learners. I felt that the material culture objects on display would have particular meaning for adult learners with rural backgrounds and for whom these objects would be familiar.

I saw an opportunity to start an adult education programme at the museum where I was based. However, at this early stage of my tenure at the museum. I had not yet fully understood how the segregation policies of the apartheid government were represented in the museum through the way in which the San, and the various 'cultures' and language groups were displayed separately, as they were segregated in different areas. The interests of the dominant white cultural grouping were also segregated and separate, and represented in what was then the South African Cultural History Museum. It was only when I started research for this thesis and learnt more about the treatment of the San over three hundred years, and how this treatment could be seen in the way they were displayed and represented, that I began to appreciate the deep suffering the San had to endure. This deeper understanding in part also came about in the late 1990s when museums were engaging with the notion that they had to transform and look at the way in which colonial collections in particular were represented, as a result of the fast changing political landscape.

Whilst working at the museum I developed a deep and lasting interest in archaeology and palaeontology as well as in San rock art, which I often used as the basis for learning in the adult literacy classes. I was particularly interested in understanding the significance and meaning of rock art. I was fortunate to see rock art in situ whilst

in the company of archaeologists at various sites in the Western Cape and became intrigued by the cultural and spiritual life of the San. I had not yet appreciated in any depth how rock art in the museum was represented in a way that took it out of context without any interpretation. I also did not realise that there was little understanding of the richness of rock art and the central role it plays in San life nor the implications of the way in which the San were represented in the diorama. The implications of the way in which these exhibitions were made only started becoming clear to me as the political and museological landscape started changing and with this came the call for transformation in museums (Rankin 2013; Corsane 2004, 2005; Witz 2015). I also came to understand the origins of the fields of ethnography and anthropology and the influence these disciplines had on the way the San were viewed and represented. It was late into the research for this thesis as a result of the wide reading I was doing on politics, history and museology that this started becoming clear to me and I could start seeing the links between the colonial and apartheid regimes and museum practice and display. This radically changed the way in which I had viewed and understood museums earlier, as fairly neutral in the way people were represented.

The current exhibition on the San, */Qe – the power of rock art*, was designed and mounted in my last year at the museum, two years after the closure of the San diorama (discussed in chapter 4). The diorama became increasingly contentious because it represented the San in a setting in which the focus was still on physical characteristics. I was interested in how the rock art panels that had previously been displayed in the same gallery as the diorama were recontextualised in this exhibition, and in particular how the rich spiritual aspects of rock art, drawn from the Bleek and Lloyd manuscripts were incorporated (discussed in chapter 5). The manuscripts contain the verbatim transcripts of stories and myths told to Wilhelm Bleek and Lucy Lloyd by San informants. The manuscripts are a rich resource that tell of the spiritual life of the San and the meaning of rock art. I had seen photographs of the first exhibition of the San and considered the difference in the way in which they were represented in these three exhibitions. The difference in representation across the exhibitions thus becomes the focus of my interest.

I have raised some of the tensions, on the one hand, my expertise in adult education and museum practice, and on the other, my growing recognition of how, as the research progressed, I was working inside the same discourses that I was identifying across the three moments. This led to an inner conflict. I have placed this early in the thesis to upfront the difficulties of working with sensitive material that represents the lives of people who suffered immensely under colonialism.

1.6 Outline of chapters

Chapter 2 presents key debates in museum studies literature, multimodal social semiotics and discusses colonialism and decolonisation in relation to educational institutions. It draws on, inter alia, the work of Bezemer and Kress (2008, 2009), Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996) and Van Leeuwen (2005). The chapter shows that discourse is an important element in multimodal analysis, and that discourse is expressed in the layout and content of museums. It uses Bezemer and Kress' (2008) conceptual and methodological tool to understand recontextualisation of artefacts and representation in museums. Selection and classification, key to museum practice, is discussed with regard to museum policy and display, and to the new discipline, anthropology, which is underpinned by classification, making it possible to focus on difference and 'race'.

In chapter 3 the methodology used to interrogate the research questions is outlined. The research methodology, drawing in particular on the work of Bezemer and Kress (2008), uses a multimodal social semiotic framework that has three rhetorical principles: selection, arrangement and social relations. This framework enables the understanding of representation in museums, through an analysis of three historically situated exhibitions. There is a focus on recontextualisation of meaning material, including the San casts and material culture artefacts. The chapter ends with an outline of the data and a discussion of the framework for data analysis.

Chapter 4 begins with a brief overview of the exhibitions of the San from 1911 to the present and highlights the four dominant discourses in these exhibitions. There is a discussion on Darwinism and how 'race' and racism became manifest in the first exhibition of the San. Given the view that they were becoming 'extinct', the extermination of the San, which in part led to the establishment of the so-called casting project, is discussed. It is this record, the casts that were displayed in the first two exhibitions of the San. This is followed by a discussion on display and race and the practice of classification in museums.

Chapter 5 discusses the second moment, the display of the San casts in a diorama. The origin of dioramas is discussed as is the motivation for the display of the San casts in a diorama, followed by a discussion of the ecological discourse which underpins this exhibition of the San. Then there is a discussion of the third moment when display panels contextualising the diorama were erected when it became clear that museums needed to transform as the political landscape began to change with apartheid coming to an end. The diorama is analysed, which is followed by a brief description of the *Miscast* exhibition at the nearby South African National Gallery that

aimed to contest the diorama. This is followed by a discussion of the representation of a San woman, Sara Baartman, who became a victim of colonialism and racial science and the sculpture of her which is displayed in the library of the University of Cape Town. This sculpture became a focus in the Rhodes Must Fall movement and is used to highlight the way in which people are represented.

The sixth chapter discusses museum practice in post-apartheid South Africa and looks in particular at how transformation in the museum and heritage sector manifests in the conception and design of the current San exhibition. The chapter looks at post-apartheid discourses in the heritage sector. It shows how the deep and rich spirituality of the San is foregrounded in this exhibition, in contrast to representations in the previous two exhibitions. The exhibition is analysed with regard to texture, materiality, colour, lighting, arrangement and the relation between writing, image and three-dimensionality. It shows how different discourses are manifest in the exhibition, such as a discourse of spirituality and a scientific discourse as well as the ways in which vestiges of more colonial discourses remain.

The final chapter discusses the outcomes of the research in relation to the research questions. The analysis of the three exhibitions showed that a multimodal social semiotic framework is a powerful tool for understanding how different discourses became manifest in museum display over time. Three semiotic principles – selection, arrangement and social relations which underpin the theoretical framework – were used to map a re-imagining of museum display in order to see what forms transformation in museums could take and to suggest how the questions about the ongoing project of 'decolonisation' can be brought to the site of the museum.

Chapter 2

Literature review and theoretical framework: bringing multimodal social semiotic analysis to museum studies

2.1 Overview

This chapter introduces a multimodal social semiotic approach and how it might apply to the site of museum displays. A framework for the analysis of the recontextualisation and refraction of circulating discourses in the San exhibitions is proposed. The chapter begins with an outline of current shifts reflected in museum studies literature with regard to communication, multimodality and education. This includes a move from a transmission model in which messages were understood to be received as they were communicated to newer models of communication in which it is understood that receivers of messages interpret the messages they receive based on their own experience and knowledge. The chapter proposes a metafunctional approach (Halliday 1978) to the analysis of museum displays, which enables the analysis of representation in museums, and the manifestation of power that underpins representation in these spaces. This chapter closes with a discussion on the new museology with regard to how museology has changed. The focus has shifted from the right to speak for others to being critical of racial and evolutionary hierarchies in museum practice. This ties in with the ethos of decolonisation, also discussed in this chapter, with reference to the work of Fanon (1993), Nyamnjoh (2016) and Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (2009).

2.2 Museums as educational spaces

Museums are first and foremost pedagogic institutions. The International Committee of Museums defines museums as follows: 'A museum is a non-profit permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment.' (ICOM Code of Ethics 2013). According to Hooper-Greenhill (1991), it has been recognised since the early nineteenth century that museums are, by their very nature, educational institutions. Kress notes that from a pedagogical

perspective, museum displays present a curriculum (2010:39). Museum 'education' is structured through the narratives that are constructed by exhibitions, and through the methods that are used to communicate these messages. Display is a major form of education; it is through exhibitions that museums produce and communicate knowledge (Hooper-Greenhill 2007:3–4). I argue for education to be viewed in this broad sense, rather than in the sense of museum education being only specific educational interventions.

By bringing museums into focus as educational institutions rather than simply repositories or archives, this study contributes to an under-researched area of scholarship. As Hooper-Greenhill notes: 'museum education is under-researched and under-theorised' (2007:5), whereas the educational role of the museum is well-established as a concept (Hooper-Greenhill 2007:1). Hein (1998:3) states that 'Education as a museum function has been recognised as long as there have been public museums'. This role is made clear in the statutes adopted at the 22nd General Assembly of the International Council of Museums held in Vienna, Austria, on 24 August 2007. Many writers such as Eichstedt (2006:132, 135), Hein (2001:3) and Coombes (1994:43) see this 'soft' form of education expressed in museum exhibitions. It was only in 1997 that the British government insisted in their policies that education in museums should be centrally positioned (Hooper-Greenhill 2007:2).

Museums were also seen as a key part of the broader educational project in the colonies. When the South African Museum – the site of this study – was established in 1825 the notice that appeared in the *Cape Town Gazette and African Advertiser* of 11 June stated clearly what a museum must do; that is, collect specimens, study and classify them and provide a service of public instruction. Hooper-Greenhill (2007:2) does note, however, that the powerful educational role of displays and exhibitions is barely acknowledged, making the point that not only formal educational programmes play an educational role in museums. The educational role of museums is becoming more recognised. The growing acknowledgement of the educational function in museums suggests that the identity of museums is also shifting. Genoways (2006:2–3) argues that museums have become part of the learning industry and that museums identify themselves with the education world. Museums are institutions financed by the state, with the aim of educating citizens and offering them forms of enjoyment, as well as providing a focus of national consciousness.

Foucault (1986) considers museums and libraries to be 'heterotopias' that are characteristic of nineteenth-century Western culture in his essay, and writes that heterotopias are: 'places in which all the other real sites that can be found within

the culture are simultaneously represented, contested and inverted' (1986:24). While undoubtedly they can be seen as institutions that reflect the 'civilising' function of the enlightenment, they are also open to interpretation in ways that schools, for example, with their overtly didactic function, are not. This view is useful because it does not only see power in negative terms. Museums can also be places of contestation and inversion. According to Lord (2006:5) the museum can be a heterotopia not because it contains different objects, nor because it juxtaposes different times, but because it presents the difference between objects and concepts. Museums may function as heterotopias due to the spatial aspect of display – the juxtaposition of temporally discontinuous objects. Lord (2006:5) states that a heterotopia needs to be considered as a space of difference; a museum does not only represent objects that are different from one another, but it also represents objects in their difference from the conceptual orders in which those objects would normally be understood.

Bennett (1997:19–24), describing the development of the public museum and the role that museums came to play, argues that museums acquired their form in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and were seen to be institutions of high culture, places in which culture is represented. The formation of museums took place against developments through which culture was seen to be useful for governing the citizens of Britain by the government. These institutions of 'high culture' were enlisted by government to 'civilise' the population; museums could function as a space in which 'civilised' forms of behaviour could be learnt and diffused more widely. The educational role of the early nineteenth-century public museums had a social purpose, and was focused on the working classes. They were seen as a means of enlightenment to educate the masses by teaching them about the universe through the display of objects (Stenglin 2004:85; Genoways 2006:2, 65; Hooper-Greenhill 2007:3, 13, 24–25; Eichstedt 2006:132, 135; Bennett 1995; Hein 2006:8). By the mid-nineteenth-century, museums were conceptualised as 'an instrument of public instruction' (Bennett 2005) and tasked to 'be the keeper of the nation's heritage and to educate the masses' (Genoways 2006). By 1857 the South Kensington Museum, today the Victoria and Albert Museum, was administered under the auspices of the Board of Education, defining museums as instruments of public education. Martinon (2006:64–65) notes that until the nineteenth century the museum promised to educate the masses, as can be seen the mission statement of the South Kensington Museum that stated that it was imperative to keep a policy of low admission charges and late opening hours for the working classes, making the main mission of the museum messianic. The museum's instructional and social purpose was strongly influenced by the belief that people

could be morally and intellectually improved (Bennett 1995:18–20). Colonialism also had a 'civilising' mission, embodied in universities established in colonised African countries. This was also the case with museums in colonised countries, which had their origins in the early British museums (Bennett 1998:79). Museums are educational institutions, teaching through their exhibitions and public and education programmes.

Albeit that museums are educational institutions first and foremost, they are inherently political in nature. Museums are always ideologically motivated whether it is by state, private or commercial motivations. The first public museums contained, inter alia, collections of artefacts collected from the colonies. These material culture artefacts were classified and displayed as objects of people that were 'other', 'uncivilised' and on the lower rung of the evolutionary scale, and in the case of the San stripped of their humanity. The power in museums lies with the curators and scientists and often the funding bodies, which in most instances is the state. The policies and beliefs enacted by those in power such as evolutionary views became manifest in the way in which indigenous cultures were represented, which were inherently political. The political nature of museums can be demonstrated in current times museums in South Africa to transform, which entailed recontextualising the way in which indigenous people, for example, were represented.

According to Hooper-Greenhill (2007), an approach to museum exhibitions during the last part of the nineteenth century was based on how objects may be used in the production of knowledge. Objects, or artefacts, were viewed as sources of knowledge and as parts of the world that had fixed and finite meanings that could be discovered once and for all and then taught through being put on display. Making this knowledge available through public museums was in itself an educational act. Hooper-Greenhill (2007:130–131) describes learning in the early nineteenth-century museums in the following manner. Education was based on objects, which spoke for themselves. The museum visitor was accorded the status of a neutral observer that walked through the ordered and well-lit galleries laid out for the acquisition of knowledge. This knowledge could be construed from the objects that, once arranged in a neutral space, would speak for themselves. The exhibits carried the messages intended by the curators, considered to be experts. These experts told the stories of evolutionary progress and of the encyclopaedic mapping and classifying of the natural and material world. These authoritative master narratives were transmitted to a general public who, it was assumed, would deploy their neutral gazes in a rational manner. An abstract rhetorical intention was at the time one of the primary ideals of a museum.

The social purpose of museums continued to underpin museum education at this time. In 1907 the first eugenics society, The Eugenics Education Society, was established in Britain, and was filled with people who wished to improve and control the masses, similar in mission to what the British Government intended to do with museums. Evolutionary views provided powerful biological backing to those who wished to divide society according to ethnic difference and to promote white supremacy. This was done through the exhibiting of the material culture of different peoples in the colonies, which made the British imperialists appear superior (Browne 2006:127–128). The aim of the British Government, according to Bennett (1995:18–20) was to 'civilise' the population and to 'transform its citizens by regulating their behaviour'. This included visits to museums. The 'lower classes' were encouraged to visit libraries, art galleries and museums. The underlying idea was that by visiting cultural institutions the masses would learn to imitate the behaviour, dress, morals, manners, norms and values of their 'social superiors'. Museums were intended to work towards the good of society by inculcating a taste of the arts in the working classes, a civilising mission that was linked to the growth of citizenship (Hooper-Greenhill 2007:13). The first governing body of the Victoria and Albert Museum in London states in the 1850s: 'By proper arrangements a Museum may be made in the highest degree instructional'. Bennett applied Foucault's early ideas about disciplinary power, panopticism and governmentality to the nineteenth-century museum. He makes the argument that museums of this time should be understood as institutions that were designed to 'improve' the populace and to encourage citizens to regulate and police themselves (Mason 2006:24).

Museum visitors today are understood differently from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries when they were seen as deficient in that they lacked information, needed instruction, were intended to act as receivers as knowledge and were empty vessels to be filled. Today they are no longer being seen as an undifferentiated mass (Hooper-Greenhill 2007:125). It is now understood that visitors make their own meaning and are no longer viewed as passive recipients of knowledge. Hooper-Greenhill (2007) shows how museums today are searching for ways in which to respond to the considerable changes that have occurred since museums' social and educational roles were last declared important. New ideas about the educational use and potential of museums are needed. After conducting a big research project in the United Kingdom, Hooper-Greenhill (2007:200–201) argued that the power of museum education can now clearly be seen and that this research evidence has clearly shown how museums can match and exceed the government's expectations and complement

the state's provision of educational programmes. The educational power shown by this research locates the museum as a key site for learning in the new century and argues that new ways of articulating educational values of museums are needed.

Kress (2010:59) argues that educationally speaking an exhibition is a curriculum for the visitor. He notes that museums are increasingly becoming sites of what he terms 'social education' that propose conceptions of a social and cultural nature to their visitors. An exhibition is therefore the design of a learning environment; educationally an exhibition represents a curriculum for a visitor or a learner. Museums are increasingly expected to provide socially inclusive environments for lifelong learning (Hooper-Greenhill 2007:1). Museums are not the same as sites of learning like schools. They have no national curriculum and no formal system of assessment, thus learning in museums can be more open-ended, less directive and more permissive than traditional institutions of formal learning (Hein 2006). Museums are environments in which there can be many more diverse responses than in formal sites of learning such as schools where the content of what is taught is directed by externally established standards (Hooper-Greenhill 2007:24–25). The richness of museums as sites of learning is also borne out by Hein (2006:2) who notes that the primary asset of museums is the polysemic character of the objects that lend themselves to a multitude of interpretations.

Although this study is not primarily interested in the meaning that museum visitors take away from the museum experience, if we recognise that museums have a broad educational function, then it is important to understand how museum exhibitions recontextualise, select and display artefacts; and to understand what is left out from one exhibition to the next over an historical period. Museums, by selecting – and by not selecting – objects, photographs and written texts construct views and present stories. A multimodal social semiotic analysis of the display of the San enables an understanding of the importance of what has and has not been displayed.

Kress (2010) makes the point, based on a research project undertaken in the Museum of Antiquities in Stockholm and in the Museum of London that, unlike with schools, museums tend not to exercise power over their visitors and their engagement with an exhibition, making learning different in important ways. This research showed that visitors fashioned their own distinct interpretation. The conclusion drawn is that the visitor's, or interpreter's, interest produced the attention, which shaped the form of the engagement and led to the selections that are made, framed, transducted and transformed, with the result that the evidence of interest became manifest in the new sign, the drawing that visitors were asked to produce.

A change has taken place in museum education from a model in which education had a social function – that of educating the masses through the display of objects to one in which education takes place through exhibitions as the curricula in museums. In this, museums as sites of learning differ from formal sites of learning such as schools.

2.3 Shifts in views on museum communication

There has been a broad shift in approaches to communication from a monomodal to a multimodal model of representation, from a transmission model to a more socially constructed view of meaning making, which has also impacted on conceptions of museum communication. Communication in museums used to be viewed as one-way and linear – what was known as the transmission model of communication (Mason 2005; Hooper-Greenhill 2007; Ravelli 2006). In this model, the knowledge from the authoritative institution is perceived as transmitted to the receiver, the museum visitor, who was considered to be 'empty' and not to have influence on the way in which the message was received. In newer models it is believed that the receiver of the message influences the way in which the message is received (Hooper-Greenhill 2007).

Museum studies literature reflects this shift in views on communication from what is termed the 'expert-to-novice' approach, to an interpretive paradigm in which meaning is negotiated. Mason (2005:201) states that a mechanistic transmission model of museum communication is no longer applicable. In line with this view, Hooper-Greenhill (2007:134) argues that the understanding of communication as a process of transmission is severely limited and ignores the social and cultural aspects of communication. In this approach, the complex, ambiguous, multidimensional and fluid process of communication is reduced to a single, one-way, linear, cognitive trajectory that has the function of transporting a single piece of information. The selection, definition and control of the message lie with the communicator, who becomes the power-broker in the transaction. The shift in approach to communication in museums is one in which information is 'presented' to visitors in unidirectional, hierarchical and didactic ways to one in which exhibitions facilitate intellectual engagement, or negotiation of knowledge (Ravelli 2006:32).

Museum visitors are now seen to be active participants who bring with them different ways of making meaning of displays, and different interests. Kress argues that the 'maker of the meaning's' agency is central, although their possibilities to act are restricted due to social, cultural and economic circumstances (Kress 2010:107).

All individuals have agency and they are all producers of signs and meaning. This is contrary to older understandings of museum communication, the 'expert-to-novice' approach, in which it was assumed that visitors understand the meaning as *intended*, and not *interpreted* through their interest.

Rather than seeing these two models of communication as a clear cut binary, Kress (2010) shows that the role of what he calls the rhetor (the person communicating) is complemented by the role of the interpreter, the museum visitor, and that signs are made by both the rhetor and the interpreter. It is the negotiation between them that is important. The sign complex created by the interpreter is the result of attention, engagement and selection from the message which is framed according to the interpreter's interest and reshaped as a new sign complex (Kress 2010:45). In this model of communication the social is present through the interests of the museum practitioner and the visitor; both the rhetor and the interpreter bring their own cultural and semiotic resources and values (Kress 2010:45). Meaning making in museums is thus a negotiation between the curators and the visitors, and both are designers and interpreters.

Museums tend to be authoritative institutions in which knowledge is generated and meaning created, controlled and communicated through exhibition and education programmes (Davison 2001:91). Subjectivity, meaning, knowledge, truth and history are the materials of cultural politics, and museums are deeply involved in these areas – and especially in their interrelationships with power: the power to name, to create official versions, to represent the social world and to represent the past (Hooper-Greenhill 2007:19). Questions of meaning are questions of power, which raise issues about the politics of representation. This necessitates questions such as who has the power to create, to make visible and to legitimate meanings and values (Hooper-Greenhill 2007:19). Bennett (1998:76, 79) makes the point that museums have the power to arrange things and bodies for public display and that, in so doing people become the subjects rather than the objects of knowledge.

Power is not only invested within museums and museum practice, but is influenced by governance and funding from state institutions. Local and national politics influence museum policy, especially with regard to funding. The policy of museums frames the conceptualisation of displays. Museums are not and cannot be ideologically neutral institutions – they are state institutions by their function and represent the ruling class ideology.

Early museums came to evoke civic, colonial, national and imperial power. Narratives were produced at museums that gave legitimacy to certain worldviews,

in particular as museums are seen as a space were the highest standards of scientific rationality and objectivity are practised.

At the South African Museum, anthropological specimens were displayed in a way which indicates a buttressing of state policy at the time. Anthropological displays were exhibited in a way that reinforced racial stereotypes that were commonplace in South Africa and Britain (Strydom 2017:15, 16). This is particularly evident in the first two exhibitions of the San, which were clearly aligned with the theory of differences between races. The displays served to emphasise the colonial gaze in exhibitions: a view of the world as expressed from the vantage point of the coloniser which gave the people it aimed to represent no agency. At the same time this practice made it seem as though the coloniser was somehow separate from the colonised, further increasing the imaged evolutionary rift between living human beings (Strydom 2017:16). These exhibitions can be seen as an aid to the state to further its ideology, demonstrating how the view of the ruling elite were entrenched.

Museums create official versions and represent the social world. Decisions are made by the curator about the technology to be used to communicate the information, be it the artefact, text, image, sound or film, or the style of the design that includes texture, colour and space – modes in the language of Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006, 2001), Kress (2010) and Jewitt (2009). The history of the development of museums, the architecture and the gravity of museums' responsibility as stewards over the nation's cultural heritage have bestowed on these institutions authority over matters of knowledge (Anderson 2004:222). Inherent in this authority is the long scholarly legacy out of which museums grew.

However, with the shift in models of communication, there has been a shift in view about where power lies. In an interpretive model of communication, power no longer lies with the sender of the message but also with the receiver of the message who is seen to have the power to construct meaning (Hooper-Greenhill 2007:139). It is now accepted in communication theory that social and cultural aspects are involved in the making of meaning, the interpretation of messages. It is understood that the museum visitor has power to interpret, based on their particular interest and the cultural and semiotic resources they bring with them. In today's museum environment there is the potential to make a shift in power relations between museums and visitors, thus making museums more accessible public resources in which visitors learn in a variety of ways (Ravelli 2006:369). This is particularly true in South Africa where museums are not considered to be accessible to all and are still seen as elitist institutions.

Social semiotics provides useful terms that can be brought to museum studies,

including notions of interest and design and the idea that choice is always circumscribed and shaped by power (Kress 2010:28). Kress (2010) argues that any semiotic entity is the result of design. This involves choice that reflects interest. Power resides within museum professionals as they choose what will be communicated through an exhibition and accompanying labels. Interest is complex and arises out of the cultural, social and psychological history of the sign-maker and manifests in the making of museum exhibitions, which construct messages. Kress (2010:43) makes the argument that an exhibition, like any semiotic entity is the result of what he terms 'design' that asks questions such as 'What is the environment of communication?', 'What relations of power are at issue?', 'What are their criterial characteristics?' and 'What resources are available to make the message?'. These questions, for Kress (2010:43), raise questions of choice, for example, the policies of a museum and the interests of the museum practitioners such as curators. Kress (2010:43) states that rhetoric is the politics of communication, which encompasses all aspects of the making of an exhibition from the initial conception to the design, salience given to particular themes and areas, selection of objects and the modes chosen to represent specific content such as layout and lighting. Having outlined some broad shifts in approach to communication and the impact on museum practice, this chapter now looks in more detail at a multimodal social semiotic approach to communication and then discusses it within a museum context.

2.4 A multimodal social semiotic approach to museum communication

A multimodal approach considers language as only one form of representation. Other forms of representation can include gesture, sound, image and music. Museum exhibitions always consist of more than one mode. They comprise writing, photographs, graphs and artefacts as well as, at times, video and audio clips. By attending only to language, the wealth of detail and information in museum exhibitions would be lost.

Key elements of a multimodal social semiotic approach are that communication is multifunctional, and that all communication is multimodal. A multimodal social semiotic approach is widely acknowledged to emerge from the work of social semiotician Michael Halliday's view of language as profoundly social. Halliday (1978) adopted the theoretical notion of metafunction for dealing with the communicational requirements of a full system of communication. According to this, the three metafunctions must be realised simultaneously: the ideational, interpersonal and textual. The ideational deals with representation, the interpersonal with the social

world – in particular the relationship between author and the audience, and the textual deals with the verbal world, in particular the flow of information in a text. According to Halliday (1978:112–113) 'the textual component has an enabling function with respect to the other two; it is only in combination with textual meanings that the ideational and interpersonal meanings are actualized'. This metafunctional view of text crosses different disciplines and a range of modes and genres, which makes social semiotics an apt theoretical approach for examining exhibitions and displays in three-dimensional space.

Kress and Van Leeuwen extended the understanding of the three metafunctions propounded by Halliday for dealing with the representational requirements of visual communication (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2006:40). The representational function is concerned with building and maintaining a theory of experience. This is the function for construing human experience, that by which sense is made of the world. In describing the representational/ideational metafunction, Kress and Van Leeuwen argue that a semiotic system has to be able to represent aspects of the experiential world, including objects and their relations, outside its particular system of signs. According to Kress and Van Leeuwen, the interpersonal/interactive metafunction relates to the relations between the producer of a sign and the receiver of that sign. They argue that a semiotic system has to be able to project a social relation between the producer, the receiver and the object that is represented (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2006:41). The interpersonal function refers to the semiotic choices that enable communicators to enact their complex and diverse interpersonal relations, and relates to the interactivity of a text. A text thus always positions us in relation to something or someone. With regard to the textual metafunction, Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006:41) posit that a semiotic system has to have the capacity to form texts, which are complexes of signs that cohere internally and with the context in which and for which they were produced. The textual metafunction encompasses all the grammatical systems responsible for the flow of discourse; the metafunctions are conceptual tools to think about semiotic resources and the meaning potential modes such as gaze, writing, speech and image make available (Jewitt 2009:19), but they are always shaped by how they are used by people to make meaning.

A social semiotic approach to museum exhibitions assumes that meaning is socially created (Halliday 1978:125), which is in contrast to linear transmission models of communication discussed earlier. In a social semiotic approach to museum exhibitions, meaning is regarded as socially situated. The approach thus places people at the centre of meaning making; people are the designers and interpreters

of meaning, which they do by making active choices using the semiotic resources at their disposal (Stein 2008; Kress and Van Leeuwen; Kress 2010; Jewitt and Kress 2003; Ravelli 2006). Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006:6) argue that representation arises out of the cultural, social and psychological history of the sign maker and that a sign is focused by the specific context in which it is produced. Signs are messages that have structure and content, representing the interest of the sign makers (Kress 2010:35). Sign makers use the most apt representational mode for a particular context. For instance, in a museum context the sign maker chooses the most apt way to represent materials related to an artefact. This can take the form of a museum label or caption, a diagram or a photograph.

There is a growing body of work on museums and multimodality. Most interesting for this research is research in two areas: visitor studies and exhibitions as multimodal three dimensional texts.

2.5 Visitor studies

Examples of work on visitor studies include that of Bezemer, Diamantopoulou, Jewitt, Kress and Mavers (2012), Diamantopoulou (2008), and Lindstrand and Insulander (2012). Research has also been done on the exhibition as multimodal pedagogical text (Insulander 2007), exhibition design (Lindstrand and Insulander 2012), and learning in museums (Bezemer et al 2012; Insulander 2008). Bezemer et al (2012) sought to understand the constraints of meaning making in visitors' engagement with a museum exhibition, foregrounding the agency of the visitor, irrespective of the technologies involved. The visitors made maps of the exhibition at the end of their visit. Through this study, insight was gained into the concepts of design and re-design in relation to what a social semiotic perspective can offer in terms of learning. Bezemer et al (2012) advocate that visitors are agents of their own designs for learning and that they can potentially make their own meaning irrespective of the design that is materialised through exhibitions. They suggest that visitors learn by making selections and transformations of exhibitions based on their own interests and responses to various prompts that emerge in and through social interaction.

With a different focus, but still using a multimodal approach in the tradition of Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996), Insulander (2007) explores the museum as an educational site. The approach of Insulander (2007) implies a view of communication and learning as a social process of sign making where the meaning of a message is realised across several modes of communication. In this research the design of an archaeological exhibition at the Museum of National Antiquities in Stockholm in

Sweden is studied. In particular the study examines a specific reading path and how it creates coherence through framing and through the use of the mode of colour. The research concludes that meaning is made through the modes of image, sound, colour and text and suggests that an exhibition be read as a pedagogical text.

Similar to the study done by Bezemer et al (2012) in which visitors were asked to draw maps after viewing an exhibition, in the study by Insulander (2007) visitors were also asked to draw maps after viewing the prehistories exhibition. This data was used to analyse meaning making in museums. This study also concludes that visitors design their own meaning. Diamantopoulou (2008) bases her work on the assumption that learning can be multimodally mediated through a particular kind of education and can be made accessible through the material realisation of children's production across multiple modes. She theorises that by engaging with children's graphic 'ensembles' (drawings), a multimodal and social semiotic approach can enable the recovery of meanings about an archaeological site as well as aspects of the learning experience. Her study highlights the fact that multimodality can operate as an analytical lens that leads attention to areas where meanings emerge beyond language.

In research, important for visitor studies, Lindstrand and Insulander (2012) use a multimodal social semiotic view of communication and meaning making to analyse exhibition design. They argue that a multimodal and social semiotic approach emphasises social aspects of communication. This approach pays particular attention to the interplay between different modes. They make the point that in museum exhibitions meanings are constructed and construed by means of a combination of aspects such as objects, written texts, light design, colour and sounds. According to Lindstrand and Insulander (2012) visitors combine speech with gestures, facial expression and ways of moving within an exhibition in their communication. They argue that in both instances various modes are set to perform different tasks in the production of meaning.

2.6 (Towards) three-dimensional space

Beyond the studies mentioned above, researchers such as Ravelli (2006) and Stenglin (2004) are interested in museum communication and three-dimensional space. Ravelli (2006) is mainly interested in the relationship of communication to its social context, including the domain of museum communication. Drawing on a Hallidayan framework, she is interested in the potential for a more extended application of frameworks beyond language to other forms of communication. She (2006:151) argues that texts in museums do not exist apart from their exhibitionary or institutional context, and

that exhibitions and institutions are complex, multimodal texts which make their meaning through a combination of resources across various semiotic systems. For Ravelli (2006:121), text works at the level of written text and exhibition as texts as well as museums as texts. At the level of museums as texts, it is the way in which the whole institution makes meaning through semiotic resources which are realised physically through the design of the building and discursively through the policies which determine the institutional goals. At the level of the exhibition, different meanings can be prioritised in exhibitions. Ravelli's analysis takes us beyond a focus on a specific aspect of displays and visitors' sense-making, to a broader view that encompasses the institutional and its policy environment. Museum buildings traditionally tend to be large, imposing and often built in Victorian style. Almeida and Ravelli (2013:235) terms these 'impressive' buildings, which tend to display the authority of the institution. Authority carried by museums is also manifest in their exhibitions. Almeida and Ravelli (2013:233–247) discuss the notion of three-dimensional spaces being viewed as texts and note that meanings are influenced by their social and cultural dimension and that this should be taken into account in their analysis.

Recent work by Ravelli and McMurtrie (2016) focuses on spatial discourse analysis. Spatial discourse analysis sits alongside disciplines such as architecture but does not replace familiar forms of analysis of architecture such as history, style and form (Ravelli and McMurtrie: 2016:2). Drawing on Kress (2010:39), Ravelli and McMurtrie consider meanings to arise from social and cultural contexts. For Ravelli and McMurtrie, spatial discourse analysis is a way in which to think about the built environment that can show how buildings can make meanings about social class, how their functionality and purpose is indicated, how comfort could be created and how directionality and flow within a building may be shown.

Ravelli and McMurtrie (2016:129, 130) discuss relational-semantic connections in relation to places of display such as museums and, in particular, art museums and ask how component units relate to each other, for example how exhibitions relate to each other. They raise questions about curatorial decisions in terms of the degree to which there is interdependency between gallery spaces and exhibitions. The analysis of the relational-semantic connections is based on multimodal discourse analysis within a social semiotic perspective (Ravelli and McMurtrie 2016:151). Similarly this research made use of discourse analysis combined with a social semiotic perspective to enhance the analysis done.

Most relevant for this study is Stenglin's (2004) work which focuses on three-dimensionality and also draws on a Hallidayan framework. She (2004:12) makes the

point that three-dimensional spaces are semiotic modes and that these spaces can be interpreted as meaning making resources in the same way in which language can. Drawing on Halliday's (1978) notion of the interpersonal, Stenglin (2004:131) proposes that interpersonal space constructed between a space and its users can make people feel 'bound' or not 'bound' – secure or insecure. When a space is too restricted, bound, it can make a visitor feel stifled and if the space is to open, unbound, it can make a person feel exposed and unsafe (Stenglin 2004:160–161). Museum buildings evoke an interpersonal response from visitors (Stenglin 2004:13).

Stenglin (2004:114–115) focuses on the way a space opens up or closes in on a person. Binding concerns the interpersonal dimension that exists in the organisation of space. It points to the affectual disposition between a person and the space that person is occupying. According to Stenglin, binding is a theory of the dialectical relationship between affect and space, with a particular focus on how a space can make a person feel secure or insecure. She notes that in a three-dimensional space the interpersonal experience is tied to how firmly the space encloses a person. Enclosing a person firmly may make the person feel comfortable, secure and protected. Conversely, when the enclosures are loosened the person may feel unencumbered and free as a result of the space opening up around them. Stenglin (2004) argues that additional factors such as light, colour, texture and pattern also influence the way a person responds to the organisation of space. Crucially she adds that people's relationships with spaces in respect of security and insecurity are culturally shaped.

Choices for binding have been put on a continuum or scale as binding is not a set of clearly defined choices. Too bound on the binding scale refers to space that is so restricted that it creates a smothering, suffocating relationship between itself and the user. Conversely, if spaces are too unbound it may make people feel exposed and unsafe.

Because of the focus on museum exhibition, this study contributes to our understanding of how museum exhibitions realise discourses, via an analysis of the interplay between modes in three-dimensional space. Next, this chapter looks more closely at mode as a key concept in multimodality, before introducing the concept of discourse which enables the study to look more systematically at changing power relations over time.

2.7 Mode

Kress (2010:79) defines modes as socially shaped and culturally given semiotic resources that are used to make meaning and are used in representation and

communication. Several modes are always used together in communication acts, in what Kress (2010) calls 'modal ensembles'. Museums include a range of modes such as artefacts, photographs, exhibition labels, graphs, line drawings or detailed illustrations. According to Kress (2010), each mode offers specific representational potentials and is particularly suited to particular communicational tasks. However, Kress and Van Leeuwen (2001:2) argue that common semiotic principles operate in and across different modes.

To count as a mode it has to fulfil all three Hallidayan metafunctions (Kress 2010:87). Ideationally, it has to represent meanings, actions, states and events in the world; interpersonally it has to represent meanings about the social relations of those engaged in the communication, and textually it has to have the ability to form texts. Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996:39) argue that modes have different potentials for meaning making, and that a multimodal social semiotic approach assumes that all modes of representation are, in principle, of equal significance in representation and communication, as all modes have potential for meaning, though differently with different modes. An example of this is colour (Kress 2010) which fulfils all three metafunctions. Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006:227–230) argue that colour can realise the ideational function. It can be used to denote people, places and things as well as classes of people, places and things and more general ideas, such as the colour of flags denoting states. Colour can be used to convey interpersonal meaning as it can be used to do things to and for each other, for example, to impress through power dressing or to warn against obstructions and other hazards by painting them orange. Colour can also function at the textual level; it can, for example, be used to create unity in texts.

Different modes interact to create meaning. This can be seen in the way in which an artefact is displayed and how the accompanying descriptive label contributes to making meaning. The meanings that are made in museum exhibitions through the different modes differ from exhibition to exhibition. Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006:177) ask whether the products of various modes should be analysed separately or in an integrated way, whether the meanings of the whole should be treated as the sum of its meanings of the parts or whether the parts should be looked upon as interacting with and affecting one another. Jewitt and Kress (2003), and Kress (2010) argue that speech, dance, gesture, action and music are time-based modes, whereas 'image, sculpture and other 3D forms such as layout, architectural arrangement, streetscape' are space-based modes. Sculptures or thee-dimensional objects can be looked at from different positions, depending on how the sculpture is positioned in a gallery, which in turn influences the meaning that is made by them (Kress and

Van Leeuwen 1996, 2006). I am interested in how meanings are communicated by different modes and in whether particular modes in particular exhibitions have better communicative ability than others.

I have argued that a multimodal social semiotic approach to museum communication is apt as it assumes meaning to be made socially. This research aims to understand how discourse, museum practice and socio-political changes reflect and construct the representation of the San. Next, discourse is discussed in particular in relation to power.

2.8 Discourse as socially constructed knowledge

The notion of discourse is important in multimodal discourse analysis. For Kress, discourses are meaning making resources that are available in a society to make sense of the world. They are expressed in semiotic objects such as buildings, texts and rituals and also in the layout and content of exhibitions. All the semiotic modes that are available as a means of realisation in different settings can potentially be drawn on as a way of articulating discourse (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2001:24).

Discourses, however, are complex and do not exist in isolation, but always in relation to other discourses. Discourses are also inherently ideological and involve a set of values and viewpoints about the relationships between people and the distribution of social goods, who is an insider and who is not (Gee 1996:132). To stress the power of discourses to structure meaning, Gee writes the word Discourse with a capital letter, to distinguish it from the narrow meaning. Discourse is thus implicated in the expressing of people's points of view and value systems, many of which are pre-structured in terms of what is normal and appropriate in particular social and institutional settings (Jaworski and Coupland 1991). Discourses put forward certain concepts, viewpoints and values at the expense of others and are intimately related to the distribution of social power and hierarchical structure in society.

This research does not use discourse in the narrow sense as described by Gee (1996:103) which only pertains to language but in what Gee (1996:143) calls discourse with a big 'D', and in the sense that Van Leeuwen, drawing on Foucault, views discourse. This definition is used in combination with Jewitt (2014:27) and Kress and Van Leeuwen's (2001:4) broader definition of discourse. A broader understanding of discourse is required in order to analyse the different moments of exhibition. Discourse encompasses not only the written text, such as the correspondence that relates to the casting of the San and the museum exhibition labels, but is also embodied in, for example, the scientific views and ethos of the different eras that are discussed

in this thesis. The messages that museums communicate have origins in, inter alia, world views, political and social contexts which are organised through discourses as they work to 'systematically organise' and 'describe and delimit' communication. When applied to an exhibition it can be seen that socio-political contexts of different eras influenced different discourses, and that the discourses informed the choice of artefact, the way in which the artefacts were displayed and the written labels that were put up with the exhibitions.

Kress' earlier work has a useful definition of discourse:

> Discourses are systematically-organized sets of statements which give expression to the meanings and values of an institution. Beyond that, they define, describe and delimit what is possible to say and not say… (1985)

Kress' definition, cited above, is useful for theorising ways in which discourses underpin and reflect the exhibitions of the San casts in different socio-historical periods. Kress' contention that discourse deals with the production and organisation of meaning about the world from an institutional position is particularly useful. Knowledge, according to Kress, is produced and shaped by particular institutions and by the perspectives of particular institutions. Gee (1996) also argues that discourses are usually the 'voice of an institution'. The same is true of museums. This is elucidated by Davison (1991:97) stating that museums are widely recognised as places of specialised knowledge and that what is represented in a museum is taken on trust to be authentic. Knowledge is produced in museums through collection, research and display, and through display, education. There are museum discourses in these institutions which are familiar to and used and understood by museum professionals. I argue, however, that other than the museum discourses particular to these institutions and the work that they do, there are also many different discourses manifest in museum exhibitions.

Hooper-Greenhill (1994:224–225) has commented as follows: 'The discourse of the museum reinforces and is reinforced by governmental, educational, and cultural agencies'. Museum discourses are in line with Gee's view that certain concepts, values and viewpoints are put forward at the expense of others. They are intimately related to the distribution of social power and hierarchical structure and are ideologically inflected. They are imbued with power for several reasons that include the fact that they produce knowledge and that they have the power to name, to create official versions and to represent the past (Hooper-Greenhill 2007:19).

Next I discuss 'recontextualisation' in museums showing how all artefacts are recontextualised when they are collected and again when they are displayed, influenced by the ideologies, socio-political contexts and discourses of the eras in which they are collected and displayed.

2.9 Recontextualisation in museums

Bezemer and Kress (2008) provide a useful conceptual and methodological tool with which to analyse and understand design and representation which can be applied to museums. Artefacts in museum collections are no longer in situ once they have been removed from their point of origin. This is described as 'recontextualisation'; meaning material has been moved from one context to another (Bezemer and Kress 2008:184). In this process, three rhetorical, semiotic principles operate: selection, social relations and arrangement. These semiotic principles can be understood to be the selection of content and modes that are used in exhibition. Selection makes reference to how meaning is most aptly represented in a new environment, the meaning materials that are selected, the meaning that is recontextualised and the power that is manifested in the choices that are made with regard to representation, layout and reading paths. The semiotic principles also include the recontextualisation and arrangement of the meaning making materials such as artefacts and explanatory labels and layout, what is foregrounded and given salience, and the social relations between the museum professional (the rhetors, who create the exhibitions) and the interpreters (the visitors) who make meaning of these exhibitions.

Bezemer and Kress (2008:185) argue that modal resources in a new context may differ from those of the original context, and that meaning material is selected according to what is available or apt for the new site of representation. Questions that are asked – guided by complex rhetorical decisions – include what the rhetor, the person asking the questions, interests are, what is best for the audience in the new environment and what modal resources are available in the new environment. When, as noted, an artefact is extracted from its in situ position and moved to a museum collection, the meaning no longer remains the same. The museum professional that exhibits this artefact has to select different meaning materials in the new context; the exhibition choices are made by the curator whether or not to excavate an artefact, and which artefact from amongst a group of artefacts to choose. Complex rhetorical questions underlie these choices, as posited by Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006: 40) and Bezemer and Kress (2008:185).

As with museum communication and display, and with classification, power is

manifest in the recontextualisation of museum objects. Meaning in museums is altered through the recontextualisation of objects in a museum setting. What is important is who controls the representation of meaning. This is particularly pertinent to what the West calls the material culture of non-Western societies (Corsane 2005:57). The notion of recontextualisation is useful in the analysis of the San exhibitions. It could enable an understanding of how San material objects taken from an historical, 'real-life' context changes when they are recontextualised in museum exhibitions which attempt to create a representation of 'reality'. Museum exhibitions offer representations or mediated versions of reality (Davison 1991:95). Indigenous artefacts are recontextualised in museums and interpreted and understood through a colonial gaze and Western knowledge paradigms in display.

Material culture artefacts, which are recontextualised in museum display, as noted above, are found in museum display. They are materials which are shaped to make meaning, which differs from culture to culture. A multimodal social semiotic approach emphasises materiality (Kress 2010:105). Materiality refers to modes being the products of the work of social agents shaping material into semiotic resources (Kress 2010:77). Materiality in itself has meaning potential. Kress and Van Leeuwen (2001:28) argue that all aspects of materiality and all modes that are used in a multimodal object or text contribute to meaning. They note that different modes may be better suited than others to realise meanings, which, for example, writing and speech cannot do. Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006:231) note that material aspects of representation are signifiers. Materiality refers to what a particular culture provides as materials for meaning making (Jewitt and Kress 2003:14). People select materials, which they then draw into meaning making. According to Jewitt and Kress, a range of materials is used to make meaning, and the different materials have qualities, which Jewitt and Kress call 'affordances'. Affordance in multimodality refers to the potentialities and constraints of different modes. The term refers to the materially, socially and culturally developed ways in which meaning is made within particular semiotic resources. The affordance of a mode is shaped by its materiality. Jewitt and Kress (2003) argue that the semiotic affordances of different materials are selected by people to create meaning. The material on which an inscription is made is thus a semiotic feature. Inscription is a culturally and socially produced resource for meaning making (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2006:231). Jewitt and Kress (2003) further note that different inscription technologies favour different modes of reception and that surface plays a particularly important role. Any inscription can realise all the choices from the ideational, personal and textual (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2006:230).

Björkvall and Karlsson (2011:141) argue that materiality contributes to meaning making. They analyse post-it notes at a risk analysis meeting and Ikea tables. In the instance of the post-it notes the material resources of the notes that are shaped into semiotic resources include the size and format of the notes, the colour of the notes and the surface on which the inscriptions are made. In the instance of the tables, the design and uses of the tables are analysed. The main semiotic resources are the material and the design of the tables. The meaning potential lies in the shape of the table and what the table is used for. They make the point that the semiotic resources in both the post-it notes and the Ikea tables are the result of cultural and historical shaping and that the meaning potential in the materials the tables are made of may vary between cultures and subcultures.

According to Kress and Van Leeuwen, the material expression of text is always significant, and is a separately variable semiotic feature (2006:231). They are interested in the surfaces on which inscriptions are made, in the substance with which inscriptions are made and in the tools with which inscriptions are made. The surfaces could be paper, plastic or rock, the substance ink or paint and the tools a pen, pencil or brush. In a museum context materiality – as a textual function – can be inscriptions made by a laser printer on Perspex display case screens, museum label text printed on to board or in artefacts such as rock art. In the instance of representation in rock art the inscriptions are made with fine bones, feathers or fingers using a mixture of blood, animal fat and ochre, which is applied to rock surfaces

2.10 Classification in museum practice

Museum professionals – curators, design specialists, educators and scientists – have distinctive practices, within which power is also manifest. These practices are manifest in the core activities of museums – collection, classification, curation and exhibition – and through exhibition, education. Museums as semiotic domains have their own distinctive vocabulary, which is manifest in the texts generated by, for and in the museum. Kress (2010:35) argues that participants are embedded in networks of social relations with others who make meanings by making signs. Signs and sign complexes have shape, structure and content that represent the interest of the sign makers. Museum professionals can thus be understood to shape the signs and sign complexes – displays and exhibitions – and choose the message they wish to communicate through a particular exhibition.

Kress (2010:122–123) argues that classification is a social and semiotic process carried out by semiotic means, and that its effect is to stabilise the social world in

particular ways. The processes of classification are active in all semiotic processes and entities such as architecture or newspaper layout. As semiotic resources of a society are constantly fashioned and refashioned in the social semiotic work of interaction, classifications reflect the social organisation that produced them.

One of the primary functions of museums is classification. Power is manifest in the practice of classification and is inherent in classification. Linnaeus' system of classification, *Systema Naturae*, was first published in 1735. Visible differences were described in this system of classification. This way of classification became a model for the observation of people and their customs by eighteenth-century traveller scientists (Davison 1991:8), and was adopted by museum practitioners at this time. The evolutionary principles of classification and exhibition developed in the early museums of natural history, ethnology and geology in the late nineteenth century (Bennett 2004:2). Evolutionary museums were dependent on the practice of classification as developed and published by Linnaeus in his *Systema Naturae*.

The Enlightenment can be described as a cultural manifestation of rational thinking, scientific accuracy, observation and experiment followed by classification in order to build universal systems of knowledge (Smeds 2012:50). The immaterial taxonomic system was concretised by being 'laid out' properly in a three-dimensional space – the museum (Smeds 2012:53). An exhibition is therefore an epistemological practice born out of taxonomy and science. An exhibition is a visualisation and embodiment of scientific systems of classification in three-dimensional space (Smeds 2012:57).

The museum that is the site of this research is a natural history museum, which emerged as a public institution between 1825 and 1827, establishing small natural history and ethnographic collections. The space of representation by museums was shaped by an array of new disciplines, which included anthropology. Each new discipline in its museological deployment aimed at the representation of a type and its intersection in the developmental sequence for display to a public. At the same time as the development of these new disciplines, an historical frame for museum exhibits emerged that aimed at the life-like reproduction of an authenticated past and its representation. This was shown as a series of stages that depicted the development of peoples, states and civilisations through time conceived as a progressive series of developmental stages (Bennett 1998:88, 89).

Dubow (2000:202) notes that the typological method of classification is at the heart of physical anthropology, which is based on empiricist principles in classification taxonomy that was originally developed for the natural sciences. The concept of race as a type stressed diversity and difference over similarity and convergence,

which was overlaid with superiority and inferiority and degeneration. Davison (2001:4–5) writes that the classificatory systems that underpinned the practice of ethnology in museums confirmed and legitimised theories of race and culture. This reflects the political nature of classification systems as noted by Bowker and Star (2000). Classification underpinned museum practice in the early ethnographic museum in the late eighteenth/early nineteenth centuries. In keeping with Linnaeus' classification system, difference and not similarity was emphasised, leading to people being viewed as 'other'.

Classification systems are often sites of political and social struggles (Bowker and Star 2000:196). These systems are presented as purely technical and the political and social aspects are difficult to see. As the layers of classification systems become part of a working infrastructure, this leads to a naturalisation of the political category through a process of convergence. Classification systems are thus part of political and social systems.

Classification at a museum is an encoding of power; it is a process by which some people's worlds are incorporated into the public culture whilst others are not (Fyfe 1998:330). Fyfe argues that this creates boundaries between things and people – those that go together and those that are set apart. Kress and Van Leeuwen (2001:83) argue that power is represented in the way species or people are represented as subordinate to other species or people, which was done with the way in which people were depicted in ethnographic exhibitions. Kress and Van Leeuwen (2001:83) make the point that hierarchies of concepts and of social power are represented in such a way that the identity of the individual or a species is represented as being subordinate to its origins or ancestors in the same way that specific concepts are subordinated to more general abstract concepts.

As stated above, power firstly lies in the instance of most museums with the governments as they fund museums and thus are able determine that their views and policies are enacted in museum collection and display policies and practices. Curators and scientists inform the selection of artefacts for display as well as the information contained in the written text, in so doing holding the power of the views disseminated. This makes it possible for the views of the ruling elite to be upheld and entrenched. This power is instantiated, for example, in the display of the San through representing them in a decontextualised manner, devoid of history, names and humanity. The first two exhibitions reflected the views and policies of first the colonial powers and second the apartheid regime by focusing on racial difference by for example foreground physical characteristic. Power in museums can also be

manifest in more positive ways, such as in the pressure on museums to transform prior to and following the advent of democracy in South Africa. This is instantiated in the current exhibition of the San at which their complex and rich belief system as manifest in their rock art is central to the exhibition. Power is vested to a large extent in the descendants of the San who were consulted and included in the conception of the exhibition.

In summary, I have argued that classification, as propounded by Linnaeus and adopted in museum practice, is inherent in museum display and that classification systems are often sites of political and social struggles. I have postulated that the emphasis on difference and divergence in classificatory practices contributes to represented people being viewed as 'other'. The development of the 'new' museology is discussed next.

2.11 New museology

The 'new' museology developed in the 1980s; it was the start of a radical reassessment of the role of museums. The new museology evolved from the perceived failing of the original museology and was based on the idea that the role of museums in society need to change (Vergo 1989). It has become a theoretical and philosophical movement linked with a shift in focus, away from the functional idea of museums and stated by McDonald below. It also involves a redefinition of the relationship museums have with their communities, which includes a drive for wider access and representation of diverse groups (McCall and Gray 2013:2). Changes in museology have focused attention on the right to speak for 'others', which traditional museums have done for a long time. The new museology aims to be more theoretical and humanistic than 'the old museology' which was more concerned with the 'how to' of administration, education and conservation. It aims to understand the meaning of museum objects as situated and contextual rather than as inherent. It is also concerned with the way in which exhibitions may be perceived (McDonald 2006:2).

The reinterpretation of imperial history that has developed after political independence in colonised countries since the 1970s ultimately made an impact on curatorial practices now called 'new museology'. The new museology promotes museum work that focuses on individual and community cultural development rather than on the greatness of nations, such a former colonial powers. It is critical of the racial and the evolutionary categories and hierarchies which previously informed the collection of museum objects. In line with the thinking of the 'new' museology, curators began to reflect on what stories their exhibitions were telling and reconfiguring their

social purpose which no longer was that of the nineteenth-century narrative of progress and human hierarchy (Sauvage 2010:5, 6).

The nineteenth-century narrative of progress and human hierarchy underpinned colonialism. The colonial system is based on 'racial' difference and incorporated the racism of exploitation and its inherited justifications (Nyamnjoh 2016:3). 'Natives' were dehumanised as 'bestial' or 'animal' (Fanon 1993:32) and reason, civil society and the enlightened man symbolised the coloniser. Similarly Fanon (1993, cited in Ahluwalia and Zegeye 2001:456) argued that colonisation dehumanises and objectifies the colonised, rendering them as incapable of being human. Other writers on colonialism include Walter Rodney, and Aimé Césaire. Their critique focused on colonialism and its effects on the lives of colonised people. Colonialism came to an end in the post-war period when direct colonial administrations were withdrawn (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013:13).

Following the end of colonialism, decolonisation was not the winning of formal independence, but the 'collapse of the colonial state itself, the cruel and bloody disintegration of colonial structures'. Liberation and decolonisation cannot be equated (Mazrui 1995:28, cited in Greffrath 2016:165). For Mazrui the legacy of colonialism can only be truly abolished in a society when all remnants of colonialist structures, power and domination are purged. Only then can an authentic post-colonial order come to into being.

Ngũgĩ (2009) argues that decolonisation is not an event that happens once and for all at a given time and place but is an ongoing process (Mbembe 2015:15). This is borne out by Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013:11) stating that decolonisation did not succeed in removing colonialism and that it survived the end of direct colonialism. He argues that colonialism continues to affect the lives of people after colonialism had been formally abolished. Ndlovu-Gatsheni states that decolonisation followed the formal end of colonial rule by imperial powers in the post-World War II era, but that colonialism in South Africa ended much later, in 1994 when the first democratic elections were held and the current government came into power. South Africa is the last country in Africa to be freed from colonialism (Reddy 2016:4–7; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013:13).

Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013) argues that previously colonised people can re-launch themselves from the world of 'non-being' into the world of 'being' and that they can re-capture their lost land, power, history, being and language. He draws on Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (2009) who believes that 'disremembered' people should re-launch themselves into a world in which they are 're-membered' as part of

decoloniality. Decoloniality remakes the world of the colonised and exploited people to regain their voice, land history, knowledge and power (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2015:23).

Decolonisation has a rich intellectual history, reflected in the works of Fanon, amongst others. As can be seen above, decolonisation meant dealing with the removal of the colonial authority. According to Jansen (2018), decolonisation currently means dealing with the legacies of colonialism, such as the continued dominance of European knowledge in the curriculum of the former colonies. The task of decolonisation is to ultimately secure 'the liberation from all power organised as inequality, discrimination, exploitation, and as domination' (Quijano 2007). Jansen (2018) argues that in an African and South African context the critique has focused mainly on matters of knowledge and identity, which raises the question of whose knowledge is at the centre of the contestation over the curriculum (or museum display). Numerous African scholars have written on ways in which Eurocentricity continues to characterise school and university curricula. Museum displays, which are the curricula of museums, as this research shows, continue to be dominated by Eurocentricity. Similarly, the question of whose knowledge dominates displays (curricula of museums) remains and in part, for this reason, museums and their displays could be the focus of decolonisation. Jansen (2018) cautions that a blanket accusatory statement that university curricula are colonial artefacts, which have at their centre European and Western knowledge are not helpful. The same caution could apply to museums, which house in many cases colonial artefacts and can be said to be colonial artefacts. The question that must be asked is similar to the question facing current day universities: how do museums, as primarily educational institutions, represent Africa, including its precolonial history. What knowledge contained within the collections and exhibitions is valued and interpreted through a non-Western perspective. Mbembe (2016) states that decolonisation has become the rallying cry for those wanting to undo the racist legacies of the past, and is of the belief that the 'Rhodes Must Fall' student movement brought back on South Africa's agenda the question of deracialising the country's institutions and public culture. Wonisch (2018:1–2), asking how a post-colonial ethnographic museum could work, argues that the issue is not so much the customs of 'other cultures', but insights into colonial power relations in the past. This approach does not destroy ethnographic collections, but gives them a new contextualisation and identification as exhibits and power relations that need to be renegotiated. According to Wonisch some movement in this area in the recent past has been the renaming of museums, increasingly removing the term 'ethnology' from museum names and replacing them with terms

such as 'world culture'. By removing the term 'ethnology', the origin of collections in the context of colonialism is obscured.

In a South African context, research has been done by Mehnert (2014) on a colonial missionary museum collection, the Junod collection. She notes that collections that owe their origins to the colonial period in southern Africa present unique curatorial challenges to museum professionals and asks how one incorporates the complex relationship between coloniser and colonised into the current study of these objects. Similar to Wonisch (2017), Mehnert (2014) refers to the need for museums to look at their histories, which, as noted, is mostly one of violence. Mehnert (2014:6) argues that it is important to clarify what the context of the initial collection of the objects was in order to contribute to the contemporary debate on how African objects should be displayed. She refers to the classification of museum objects coming out of a European tradition. Collections in South African museums, which owe their existence to individuals who worked in Africa during the colonial period, need not be dismissed within the current discourse of decolonisation. She suggests that colonial museum collections can be used to foster discussion and acknowledgement, similar to Wonisch's (2017) suggestion that the history of the violence of colonialism needs to be faced. Mehnert argues that much intellectual capital has been lost through the violence of colonialism but that colonial museum collections can be used as an archive into African intellectual thought and agency. Where this is not possible, the collections could be used to begin a process of discussion about the intricacies of a system that has far-reaching consequences. What makes this an interesting point of departure is that this is a window into African intellectual thought, which is at the core of decolonisation – that of acknowledging and including into curricula African intellectual thought and knowledge. By referring to the Junod collection Mehnert (2017) asks how museums which house colonial collections can become more relevant and active in the teaching environment.

This section has shown how, in the 'new museology', the ethos of colonialism began to be questioned vis-à-vis museum practice, for example, the nineteenth-century narrative of progress and human hierarchy, which was critical of the racial and the evolutionary categories and hierarchies which previously informed the collection of museum objects. The right to speak for 'others' which began to be questioned in 'new' museology, ties in with the ethos of decolonisation in which exploited people regain their voice, land, history, knowledge and power, inter alia by museums not speaking for them – the 'others' in display.

2.12 Final comments

This chapter has argued for a multimodal social semiotic analysis of the site of a museum in South Africa covering a period of social change from 1911 to the post-apartheid representation of the San. The chapter shows how a change has taken place in views on museum communication and museum education. This shift has been from the older transmission-style communication in which the receiver of the message is without power, receiving the message as was intended by the curator, to the newer models of communication in which power resides within the receiver of the message who makes his/her own meaning of messages. The discussion on museum education shows that this educational practice is also changing. It has now been recognised that the meaning that people take from museum visits is more open to interpretation and to the viewer's interest. Further, it has argued that power is inherent in museum display, as manifested in, for example, what is included or omitted from exhibitions. Yet museum displays are also open to new meanings, as will be argued in later data analysis chapters.

Chapter 3

Methodology and framework for analysis

3.1 Overview

This chapter provides an overview of the methodology and framework for analysis. The framework draws on the work of Halliday (1978), Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) on social semiotics and multimodality, and Bezemer and Kress (2008) on recontextualisation. The chapter ends with considerations around the research on the ethics of the representation of artefacts of a first nations people.

3.2 Overview of research methodology

The research aims to make a contribution to museum studies through the use of a multimodal social semiotic framework, in particular with regard to the recontextualisation of artefacts and discourses. A multimodality approach focuses on how people communicate and interact with each other, not just through writing, but also through speaking, gesture, gaze, and visual forms. A social semiotic approach facilitates the examination of communication in museums that takes place through the interaction of multiple modes such as images, artefacts, lighting, moving images, sounds and written and spoken language (Lindstrand and Insulander 2012:32). Modes are semiotic resources for representation that are used in the making of signs and making meaning. A multimodal social semiotic perspective emphasises social aspects of communication and focuses on the interplay between different modes that are combined in signs in specific contexts. Various modes in the modal ensemble perform different tasks in the production of meaning. A multimodal approach enables the analysis of museum display and secondary texts such as photographs. This methodology makes it possible to analyse both the realisation of discourses and the interpersonal function manifest in museum display.

As mentioned in chapter 2, key to social semiotics and multimodality is Halliday's (1978) notion of metafunction, according to which the three different forms of meaning are produced simultaneously: the ideational, interpersonal and textual metafunctions. The ideational metafunction communicates something about the world, outside its own representational system (Halliday 1978). In so doing, semiotic

systems make it possible for there to be choice in the way objects can be represented and in the way they are related to each other (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2006:40). The interpersonal refers to the relation between the producer and receiver of signs. Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006:41) posit that any semiotic system has to be able to project relations between the producers of a sign or the receiver of that sign. The textual metafunction refers to the way a text is put together. Lindstrand and Insulander (2012:39) refer to exhibitions as 'exhibition-as-text'. They argue that coherence is created through the linkage between various aspects of exhibitions. Similarly, Smeds (2012:55) describes the modern museum exhibition as a 'hybrid medium' in which objects, images, light and colour are interwoven into a 'texture', or modal ensembles in Kress' terms (2010).

The tools provided by a multimodal approach make it possible to analyse the meaning making resources used in the creation of museum displays. People orchestrate meaning through their selection and configuration of modes and the interaction between different modes is thus important for meaning making (Jewitt 2009:15). Kress (2010) sees representation as arising out of the interest of the sign maker; their cultural, social and psychological history, and focuses within the context in which the sign is made. He argues that communication requires participants to make their message understandable in particular contexts and the representation requires sign makers to choose forms of expressions that are most apposite. Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006:39–40) note that different modes have different meaning potential for meaning making, that each mode has a specific social valuation in a particular context and an evolving history of representation. The use of different modes produces different kinds of meaning (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2001:28). Jewitt argues that meaning in any mode is always interwoven with meaning made with those of all other modes 'co-operating' in a communicative event. Communicational practice consists of choosing modes that are apt for particular purposes (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2001:30). This analysis demonstrates how different modes used in museum displays have varying communicative practices and communicate different meanings.

3.3 Data available for this study

This research focuses on the display of San casts from the early twentieth century to the present. The analysis traces the first exhibition of the casts of the San that was opened in 1911 when the casts were displayed as scientific 'specimens', exhibited in glass cases, naked and devoid of written text that provided an historical or social context. These San casts were subsequently exhibited in the late 1950s in a diorama

in which they were represented in an idealised late nineteenth-century camp scene. Since the closure of the diorama in 2001 the San casts have not been displayed. The diorama remains boarded up with the display intact. The third exhibition that is analysed was opened to the public in 2003 and remains open.

For analysis of the first and the second exhibitions, it was necessary to rely mostly on secondary texts, such as descriptions and the limited photographs of the exhibitions, as a result of the lack of first-hand data in the form of the actual first exhibition and diorama. The texts that were used include the museum's letterbooks, journal articles, museum literature, works on colonialism and decolonisation, literature about the San, which includes literature and films on the San and a nineteenth-century painting of the San, as well as quotes by museum professionals at various times. The literature on Sara Baartman is also a secondary text that was looked at obliquely. Sara Baartman has become symbolic of the injustice done to the San in an era of racial science described in this research. By using secondary data it became possible to get at the primary texts, the exhibitions, indirectly through context. The use of these secondary sources of data thus expanded the analysis of the primary text. What follows is a brief description of available data and secondary sources used to deepen the interpretation of the San to compensate for the lack of primary data. The inclusion of literature related to colonialism and decolonisation further contributed to the analysis and the interpretation of the data.

3.3.1 The display of the San casts (1911 to 1959)

The first exhibition of the San was designed within the ethos of what Smeds (2012:57–58) argues to be the principles of the Enlightenment, in which an exhibition was a visual embodiment of the scientific systems of classification in a three-dimensional space; glass cases were filled with typologically arranged artefacts. The casts of the San were first exhibited in a large glass display case in a museum gallery. On the wall were paintings of rock art and San paintings, the labels on the display case described the physical characteristics of the San, and the figures were mostly displayed naked. The casts in the display case were placed on plinths painted to resemble sand, and were positioned sitting, hunching, reclining and poised as if to shoot a bow and arrow. Some of the figures had bows and arrows in their hands and some of the male figures wore loin cloths. Some of the women were posed with digging sticks in their hands. This exhibition can no longer be seen and black and white photographs of the exhibition are analysed.

These early exhibitions of the San reflect what Smeds (2012:58) points to – that

exhibitions of this nature offer little or no information about ownership of objects or of their social contexts; artefacts are stripped of their contexts and contents. The primary data for this exhibition were two photographs (one a close-up) of the exhibition, which were used in scholarly publications in which they too were used as secondary data. Secondary sources include museum literature, Darwinism, South African politics, race and museum journals.

3.3.2 Diorama (1959 to 2001)

This diorama was completed and opened in 1959 and remained open to the public until 2001. It depicted San male and female figures in an idealised setting – that of a late nineteenth-century camp scene. The casts in the diorama included some of the casts displayed in the first exhibition. The diorama includes a woman who is sitting, a woman shown on the ground with a grinding stone and a woman standing. At the back, a row of San men and women are walking as if hunting and gathering. This includes a male figure with a quiver on his back and a female figure carrying a digging stick. Towards the front of the diorama a male figure holds a bow and arrow in his hand as if in readiness for shooting. Another male figure is making a fire with two fire sticks. The material culture objects in this exhibition include skin bags, ostrich egg shells for water storage and a quiver containing arrows. The diorama has been boarded up and can no longer be viewed by the public. The primary data that was used to analyse this exhibition thus included photographs of the diorama found in scholarly journals, the museum's holdings and the museum's letterbooks. The secondary data included literature on the San, a journal, a nineteenth-century painting, images of Sara Baartman and a photograph of a present-day sculpture of Sara Baartman.

Before the diorama was closed in 2001, a series of explanatory panels were erected next to it in 1998. These display panels, which were intended to be critical of the way in which the San had previously been displayed, provided information about the history of the people who were cast, the way in which the casts were exhibited and the stereotypes that were perpetuated by writers and in the popular media. The primary data used to analyse this display was a photograph of the exhibition and the accompanying text.

3.3.3 Current San exhibition

The current San exhibition entitled */Qe – the power of rock art* does not display any of the casts of the San, and tells a different story of the San, focusing on the rich spiritual and cultural life of the San, as represented in the rock art. The exhibition consists of display

cases that contain rock paintings and engravings, photographs of the San on whose recorded myths and stories the text of this exhibition is based, as well as artefacts relating to the material culture of the San. The exhibition includes a DVD showing rare footage of a trance event. This exhibition was mounted post-apartheid when transformation was taking place in the country in various areas including in museums. This involved the development of museum policies and a new approach to dealing with colonial-era collections and museums. This exhibition is still open to the public at a time when there is a call for the decolonisation of institutions of higher education and during which museums are grappling with issues related to the decolonisation of collections and displays. The primary data was the exhibition itself which was visited many times up to the present moment. The secondary data includes literature on the San.

The data that was used includes artefacts, photographs and videos. Most important, many visits were made to the actual site over several years. Photographs were taken and extensive field notes written, focusing on the relationships between the exhibitions, the dimensions of the display area and the display cases as well as the order of the display cases and the relationships between them. Discussions were held with the curator and chief scientist of this exhibition about the consultations with the descendants of the San which informed curatorial decisions as well as the ethos that informed the display. The data from the field notes, photographs, and from detailed notes of what transpired in the two videos of the trance dances was analysed using a multimodal social semiotic framework. The framework developed iteratively during the analysis process. For example, the notion of the 'reading path' was added after engaging extensively 'in situ' with the third exhibition. The data analysis was framed and categorised by the semiotic principles of recontextualisation as argued by Bezemer and Kress (2008): selection, arrangement and social relations. Although the representation of the San in this exhibition differs from the first two exhibitions in that casts of the San were not used to represent them, the theoretical concepts of selection, arrangement and social relations were applied in the same way to the analysis of all three exhibitions. These theoretical concepts were used to understand how the data demonstrated the semiotic choices made. So in principle a constant comparison was used, in seeking similarities and differences across the exhibitions. The application of these theoretical concepts made it possible, for example, to demonstrate how the evolutionary discourse is manifest in all three exhibitions, unexpectedly so in this exhibition given the principles underlying the curation such as indepth consultation with the descendants of the San. The evolutionary, ecological and transformation discourses were informed by and conceived of through the review of the relevant

literature and through the use of a multimodal social semiotic framework to analyse the data used in the three exhibitions. The primary data available for the first exhibition is extremely limited as few photographs of the San casts have survived. Similarly, few photographs of the diorama are available. In addition, there is no longer access to the diorama, even though it has remained intact, as it was closed to the public and boarded up at the time transformation was being enacted in museums as a gesture of respect for the San and as symbolic of transformation in museums after much criticism of the way the San were represented in this exhibition. Albeit that the primary data was limited, the secondary data, in particular the relevant literature, was an important source of data that was used extensively as a resource to analyse the exhibitions, enabling an indepth analysis of the three exhibitions.

3.4 A comment on 'lost texts'

It was a challenge that I could not directly analyse the first two exhibitions. By employing a multimodal social semiotic approach it is possible to analyse how museum exhibitions refract dominant discourses over time, the representation of the San in museum display and the semiotic choices that were made in the representations of the San. It also enables analysis of 'lost people' and 'lost texts'.

The San were depicted in author Laurens van der Post's book *The lost world of the Kalahari* as a 'vanished people', a lost people. The land the San called home was lost to them from the advent of colonialism through to modern times. In the BBC documentary *Botswana Bushmen: the modern life is destroying us*, Goiotseone Lobelo says of his people living in a resettlement camp in western Botswana after being moved from their original home, 'Now we are lost'. The language of the San, South Africa's first language, has also largely been lost over time, with some languages dying out and others becoming endangered, as has the San traditional way of life. The first exhibition and the diorama were closed to the public in 1959 and 2001 respectively. In addition, few photographs of these exhibitions exist, leaving few secondary texts that could be used in this research. The photographs of the first exhibition are of poor quality due to their age (nearly a hundred years old). As a result of the dearth of photographs, it became necessary to make use of secondary sources to supplement the limited information that could be gleaned from the photographs. Again, a multimodal social semiotic framework, augmented by literature on colonialism and decolonisation, made it possible to analyse these texts by focusing on the surrounding texts of the time as well as 'parallel' texts which speak to current issues of representation in public spaces, for example, the statue of Sara Baartman.

3.5 Framework for analysing the representation and recontextualisation of the San in museum displays

The data analysis is framed by the semiotic principles of recontextualisation as argued by Bezemer and Kress (2008), namely selection, arrangement and social relations (see chapter 2). Meaning material, when recontextualised, can move from social site to social site, medium to medium and from context to context. In each instance, 'remaking' is required. A move from one medium to a different medium can entail a change from one social context to another. Recontextualisation thus involves moving meaning material from one social context with its social organisation of participants and modal ensembles to another (Bezemer and Kress 2008:184). Bezemer and Kress (2008) argue that meaning material always has a semiotic realisation and therefore recontextualisation involves re-presentation of the meaning materials in a way that is apt for a new context given the available modal resources. An in situ artefact removed from the site in which it was found to a museum context will have different social organisations and modal configurations, as will the same artefact removed from a museum collection and displayed with or without different artefacts and a range of modes such as photographs and written text. A spatial recontextualisation takes place but also a shift of value occurs when objects become museum pieces (Davison 1991:88). Artefacts become alienated from their original contexts, interpreted when fieldwork is done, again when they are classified, and reinterpreted yet again when explanatory labels are written and they are spatially recontextualised in exhibitions. These objects are taken out of their social contexts and viewed as objectified representations in museum exhibitions (Genoways 2006:23, Bouquet 2012:123). They become recontextualised as part of a collection and/or a display in which new meanings are created.

The process of recontextualisation is a realisation of power as museum policy influences decisions made about the artefacts that are collected and displayed. This always happens in a particular context in which the scientific notions and the ethos of a particular time have the power to inform collecting decisions. Power is manifest within the context of curating and storing artefacts that have been collected, and in the subsequent classification of these artefacts. Museum professionals appropriate, classify and represent and have the power to foreground and privilege particular versions of the past (Davison 1991:164). Power is thus inherent in both the choice of artefacts that are displayed as well as the manner in which they are displayed. Power works across the museum management, museum funders and museum practice at any given time, and in the scientific practice and ethos of a particular time, which informs the way in which artefacts are displayed and labelled.

See table 1 below for the framework for analysis. The table summarises the semiotic principles of recontextualisation, presents the concepts for analysis and shows how these principles are realised in museum display.

Table 3.1 Framework for analysing recontextualisation in museum displays

		Concepts for analysis	Realisation in museum display
Semiotic principles in recontextualisation	*Ideational realised through selection and classification*	***Discourses*** are ideological and represent a set of values and viewpoints about the relationships between people (Gee 1996:132).	Different discourses are manifest in the three exhibitions
		Classification is a social and semiotic practice that has the effect of stabilising the social world in particular ways (Kress 2010)	Classification of artefacts according to underlying principles deemed important such as similarities in time, place, origin, style, number, etc.
		Materiality is manifested in the surfaces on which inscriptions are made, in the substances with which the inscriptions are made and in the tools used to make inscriptions (Kress and Van Leeuwen 1996:231).	Materials used to: • construct the cast of the San, • construct the displays, and • reproduce the rock art.
		Inclusion / exclusion: In museum display artefacts can be included (selected) or excluded, influencing the message that is communicated.	Selection of: • Artefacts in situ • Artefacts to exhibit • Materials and artefacts to foreground and background
		Type of visual/artefact	Selection of: • Photographs • Line drawings • DVD • Artefacts (skin bags, rock art, bows and arrows and quivers)
	Interpersonal realised though social relations	*Modality* Refers to the truth value or credibility of statements about the world (Kress and Van Leeuwen 1996:160). Also, the degree of effacement of the curator, camera or producer in the representation (e.g. an impression of unmediated representation)	• Use of colour • Contextualisation of displayed material • Lighting • Materiality/texture • Use of written information and quotes
		Direct and indirect address can manifest in the written and spoken word and in images. When manifest in images form vectors, connecting participants with viewers, in so doing creating a visual form of direct address (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2008:177)	• Written text, voice – 1st/3rd person/active and passive voice in label text • Images – foregrounded or backgrounded • Objects – foregrounded or backgrounded
		Three-dimensional space Three-dimensional spaces are semiotic modes that can be interpreted as meaning making resources in the same way in which language can (Stenglin 2004). ***Binding*** is a theory of the dialectical relationship between effect and space, and constitutes one dimension of the grammar of three-dimensional space (Stenglin 2004:115). ***Bonding*** is concerned with communing, that is the way the occupants of a space are positioned interpersonally to create solidarity (Stenglin 2004:402).	Texture , light and colour used as representation resources in the design of exhibition space

		Concepts for analysis	Realisation in museum display
Semiotic principles in recontextualisation	*Textual realised through arrangement*	***Foregrounding and backgrounding*** involve either the materiality of the means of inscription or of the object or the semiotisation of this material in acts of representation (Kress and Van Leeuwen 1996:239–260)	• Use of lighting • Placement of object (in relation to written text, image and other objects)
		Framing A frame provides unity, relation and coherence to what is framed (Kress 2014).	• Display cases • Display boards • Colour
		Layout and directionality ***Layout*** is the way in which different modes are arranged on a page or in a museum display. ***Directionality*** defines the direction in which textual entities are directed.	• Linear and non-linear compositions • Coherence between different aspects of exhibitions • Left-right, top-bottom relationships between textual entities • Centre and margin
		Visual/verbal relationships Meaning potential lies within the visual and verbal modes, which can be placed in relation to one another.	Use of visuals (objects, line drawings, photographs) in relation to written text (labels, headings on display cases, quotes)
		A 'reading' path may be linear, circular, diagonal or spiralling. The shape of the reading path itself conveys a significant cultural message (Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996:219). ***A 'walking' path*** guides a visitor through a museum exhibition, in so doing determining how the exhibition is 'read' and how meaning is made.	• Choice of 'reading' and 'walking' paths • Beginning and end of display

3.6 Ideational realised as selection

The ideational metafunction construes human experience; it is the way in which we make sense of the world. Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996:44) state that the ideational metafunction is defined as the ability of semiotic systems to represent objects and their relations in a world outside the representational system or in the semiotic systems of a culture.

The status given to selected elements and in the way these elements are selected is of ideational significance. The modal resources of the new context may be different to that of the original context and may require a selection of modes according to those needs. Meaning materials are thus selected according to what is relevant, available and apt for the new site (Bezemer and Kress 2008:185). In the museum context, choices are made in the selection of artefacts when doing fieldwork or when collecting for museum collections, as well as in the selection for display purposes. Selection also refers to the motivated partiality of representation – how meaning is most aptly represented in a new environment. Choices are made about representation; this includes how objects are represented and in the different ways in which they can be related to one another (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2006:40). The framework proposed

here looks at selection in terms of discourse, classification and materiality, inclusion and exclusion, type of visual/artefact selected. I will look at each of these in turn.

3.6.1 Discourse

This research considers discourse as above the use of language only. A broader notion of discourse is required in order to analyse museum displays as discourse encompasses not only the written text, such as museum labels, but is also embodied in the ideology expressed through displays. Discourse shapes and names the routes through which we know the socially shaped world as one kind of knowledge (Kress 2010:46). Discourses are meaning making resources that are available in a society to make sense of the world. They appear and are expressed in semiotic objects such as buildings, texts, rituals and also in the layout and content of museums. All the semiotic modes that are available as a means of realisation in different settings can be drawn on as a way of articulating discourse (Kress 2010:24, 110–113). Discourses are ideological and represent a set of values and viewpoints about the relationships between people (Gee 1996:132). Discourses also express points of view, value systems and can articulate concepts (Jaworski and Coupland 1999). Gee (1996) argues that discourses are the 'voice of an institution'. The messages that museums communicate are organised through discourses as they work to 'systematically organise' and 'describe and delimit' communication. The three exhibitions, in which the San are represented and on which this research focuses, are viewed and analysed against a socio-political backdrop that is realised through a variety of discourses. Different discourses exist alongside one another in a single exhibition. They are complex and are always in dialogue with one another.

The making of the casts of the San at the beginning of the twentieth century drew on the dominant discourses of the time, and when displayed there were different discourses in and around the casts. Drawing on Archer and Björkvall (2018:45, 46), the discourses around these casts are not present in the casts themselves, but in the beliefs and practices of the time that led to the making of the casts and in the written texts that were displayed with the casts. The material of which the casts were made and the 'shapes' – the casts themselves – were the semiotic resources that were drawn on to make meaning. Discourses can also be present in an artefact (Archer and Björkvall 2018:49). In the casts these discourses are present in the material used to make the casts, their shape and their colour, which aimed to match the skin colour of the San so as to make them exact replicas of the living people. These discourses were instantiated in the artefacts – the casts. The discourses in and around the San

are located in museum practice and the scientific views of the time and demonstrate how these discourses influenced meaning making.

3.6.2 Classification

Objects can be related in terms of classification (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2006:41). The selection of materials, from the decision about whether or not to collect an artefact, through to the classification process is motivated. Decisions are made about which artefacts will be stored together in a specific collection. A selection is also made about which artefacts from particular collections will be displayed. Different museum professionals are involved in the selection process. The scientist makes the decision about what to collect informed by a particular motivation. Likewise the scientist and the display artist make a selection informed by a particular motivation. The display artist makes a selection guided in part by an assumption about the audience – the museum visitor. Once selection has been made, classification takes place, both within the collection and also at times in displays. For instance, in the diorama, classification can be seen in the representation of division of labour in hunter-gatherer societies. The men are associated with material culture artefacts that relate to hunting – bows, arrows and quivers – and the women with material culture artefacts related to gathering, such as digging sticks, skin bags and grinding stones. Looking at the underlying systems of classification in a display can reveal much about the prevailing discourses of the time.

3.6.3 Materiality

Selection in museums is manifest in materiality. This includes surfaces on which inscriptions are made, the substances with which the inscriptions are made and the tools that are used to make the inscriptions (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2006:231). Written inscriptions are found in the labels made on the glass fronts of showcases, on the written labels that provide information about the exhibitions, and on the artefacts themselves that form part of an exhibition. Materiality is also manifest in the artefacts on display, display cases, floors in exhibition areas, and in the materials used to construct the casts of the San, materials used to construct the displays and the materials used to reconstruct rock art.

3.6.4 Inclusion and exclusion

The selection of artefacts for display is about including and excluding artefacts. The inclusion or exclusion of artefacts has influence on the message that is communicated

through displays. For example, the exclusion of indigenous knowledge in a display on indigenous people will not communicate first-hand knowledge and could result in a display that foregrounds Western knowledge. The choice to include or exclude is an ideological one. So, implicit in the exclusion of indigenous knowledge in such a display could be, for example, the notion that indigenous knowledge is regarded as of lesser value to Western knowledge. These selections are important for looking at the realisation of discourses in exhibitions even if this is somewhat complex and sometimes contradictory.

3.6.5 Type of visual/artefact

Selection includes the types of visual modes chosen, for example, photographs, line drawings, artefacts and visual materials such as video. Multimodal museum displays almost always include a verbal mode, such as the explanatory label, and an artefact. Without an explanatory label it is often difficult to make meaning of an artefact. Decontextualised artefacts, such as the casts of the San in the first exhibition, for example, may have little or no meaning if they are not familiar to the visitor, such as the casts of the San in the first exhibition. The casts not placed in historical context, were mostly naked and were posed in positions that are meaningless without explanation and interpretation and accompanying artefacts such as sticks used for making fire or grinding stones. Additional visual modes are most often in found in museum displays. These include photographs, line drawings, artefact and videos. In interactive displays, sound and images are most often selected for inclusion.

3.7 Interpersonal realised through social relations

The interpersonal metafunction relates to the social world, in particular the relationship between author and the audience. In the design of museum displays there is interactivity between the represented participants in the display and the visitors, and between museum professionals (designers of a resource) and the people and objects represented. Bezemer and Kress (2008:186) note that a social repositioning takes place in recontextualisation. In thinking about representation and recontextualisation, it is important to acknowledge the power relationship between the designers of the resources and those that are represented.

Semiotic systems offer different interpersonal relations, which can be in the form of visual representation such as a diagram or a naturalistic image. A person that is depicted in an image may look directly at the viewer, in so doing establishing a relationship with the viewer (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2006:41).

In museum communication a relationship is established between the producer of exhibitions – museum professionals – and the visitor looking at exhibitions. According to Lindstrand and Insulander (2012:38), social relations between the participants in this communication is an enactment of social interaction. The producers and receivers of messages in a museum context seldom have equal status. The power tends to lie with the producers of the message – the specialists and museum professionals who are part of an authoritative institution. Hooper-Greenhill (1994:224–225) argues that the institutional status of museums automatically confers authority on people who work in them. Museums are viewed as authoritative institutions in which knowledge is generated and meaning created, controlled and substantiated through exhibitions and educational programmes (Davison 1991:91). Curators, specialist and museum professionals speak from the security of institutions that are sanctioned within a society as places of worth and value. Their words and deeds have a legitimisation and a power that is accorded to them by this institutional context. The discourse of the museum reinforces and is reinforced by governments, educational and cultural agencies. The words of the curator are enmeshed with power and control networks of society and have a resonance beyond the power of the individual museum professional. This resonance is experienced by visitors to museums as an effect of authority.

3.7.1 Modality

Modality refers to the truth value or credibility of statements about the world (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 1996:160). Because museums are recognised as places of knowledge and education, what is represented is perceived to be authentic, real and genuine. The markers of modality in a museum include the use of colour, the way in which displayed material is contextualised, lighting and the use of written information. It also includes the degree of effacement, or not, of the curator of a display, as well as what is communicated. The way in which an artefact is contextualised as well as the supplementary written material realises modality. Modality is also afforded by the way in which lighting is used in relation to an artefact on display, for example, fixing lighting on an artefact.

3.7.2 Direct and indirect address

Direct and indirect address can be manifest in first or third person address and through the use of the active or passive voice. It can also be manifest in images, for example, in an image in which represented participants look directly at the viewer's

eyes, creating a visual form of direct address (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2006:177). The effect of this is that the viewer engages directly with the image or person.

3.7.3 Three-dimensional space

The organisation of the space creates a dialogue with the visitors. Three-dimensional spaces are semiotic modes that can be interpreted as meaning making resources. In a museum the organisation of three-dimensional space includes the exhibition space, and exhibitions in display cases. Binding and bonding refer to the way in which people experience open and closed three-dimensional spaces, and how this affects people's emotions (Stenglin 2004:171–172). Spaces can be bonded minimally, moderately or strongly. What this means is that a small and enclosed space is strongly bonded but a large, wide and open space is minimally bound. People tend to feel uncomfortable in strongly bonded spaces, but not so in open minimally bounded spaces. These are useful ways of looking at the exhibition space.

3.8 Textual metafunction realised through arrangement

Meaning materials are arranged in a certain manner in texts and in other semiotic materials. Decisions have to be made with regard to the best arrangement of meaning materials for a certain context, which includes layout and reading paths. The social environments in which arrangements are produced are significant (Kress 2010:146).

The textual metafunction refers to the notion that a semiotic system has the capacity to form texts, which are complexes of signs that cohere internally and with the context in and for which they are produced. Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006:42) note that different compositional arrangements allow the realisation of different textual meanings. In layout, for example, there can be a relation between the text and an image, or an image may be foregrounded or backgrounded. In the process of recontextualisation a decision has to be made about the arrangement of the meaning materials, for example, in which order they will be represented and what kind of semiotic arrangement will be used.

3.8.1 Foregrounding and backgrounding

This research deals with arrangement and foregrounding as a single rhetorical principle.

Foregrounding entails the assigning of salience (Bezemer and Kress 2008:185–186). Salience refers to the elements that attract a viewer's attention by varying degrees according to Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006:183) and is realised through, for example,

foregrounding and backgrounding and contrasts in colour. In the context of museum display, the placement of an artefact in a display case by either foregrounding or backgrounding or by foregrounding a particular aspect of an artefact, salience – or importance – is assigned to this artefact or aspect of an artefact.

Arrangement refers to the curation of the artefacts that have been collected through the processes described, classification of these artefacts and in the design of a display. This includes decisions that have to be made with regard to artefacts, how they are displayed in museums, how meaning is realised through display, and what information to include – and not include – in displays. When decisions are made about a museum display, these decisions are made vis-à-vis the arrangement of meaning materials – the artefacts – about their semiotic arrangement. In following conventions of display, reading paths are created. The visitor is guided by the way in which the materials and artefacts are displayed and the reading path created by the flow of the exhibition layout.

In museum display, foregrounding and backgrounding is realised through the use of lighting and the placement of objects in relation to written text, images and other objects. By focusing lighting on particular objects these can be foregrounded. Should an object be foregrounded it becomes the prime aspect of the display to look at.

3.8.2 Framing

Framing provides unity, relation and coherence to what is displayed (Kress 2014:73–74). Framing can either separate or unite the viewers and the represented participants. In museum display, objects can be framed by the showcases into which they are placed. For example, the showcase can influence the way in which the object is viewed as framing can separate the represented participant from the viewer. By doing so the viewer is distanced from the artefact, which can lead to the represented participant being viewed as different or 'other'.

3.8.3 Layout and directionality

Layout in museum display can relate to either the way in which the exhibition itself is laid out or to the way in which objects, written text, photographs and line drawings are arranged in different aspects of a display. Layout can be linear or non-linear and can influence the coherence of different aspects of exhibitions. Discourse is realised through layout in the ways that artefacts are related to each other. Layout can, for instance, signal similarities or differences between elements, thus realising the classifications that underlie discourses.

Directionality in arrangement can be seen in left and right, or given and new, arrangements between textual entities, top and bottom, or ideal and real, centre and margin and scale and direction, as well as visual and verbal relationships and reading paths both linear and non-linear. Directionality can be represented as left-right or top-down relations between textual entities, for example, between an image and written text in a museum label, or between a museum label and an object. Similarly, museum labels or objects can be placed centre or margin or top and bottom (ideal/real), and scale and direction can be represented. Directionality influences the order in which museum visitors view and 'read' displays, the objects on display and the museum labels and, in so doing, the ways that they make meaning of displays.

3.8.4 Visual/verbal relationships

Verbal/visual relationships relate to the use of visuals such as objects, line drawings and photographs in relation to the written text, such as labels on display cases as well as quotes. In museum display, objects are usually exhibited with an explanatory written label. The ways in which objects and written texts are related influences the way in which a museum display is viewed and understood and how visitors make meaning. Quotes in museum displays by represented participants can add to and influence the way in which meaning is made.

3.8.5 Reading/'walking' paths

When designing museum displays museum professionals have a choice of how they wish to direct reading and walking paths and with the way in which they choose to begin a display. With regard to reading paths, visitors are directed to the sequence in which they read labels by the way in which they are placed, one following the other be it left/right or top/bottom. 'Reading' paths are determined by the layout of the display, for example, the entrance will be the start of a display and visitors are guided between different aspects of a display and through different rooms until they come to the end of display.

3.8.6 Framework

The framework used in this research is flexible enough to investigate and analyse different aspects of a museum display, focusing on materiality, modality, salience, type of visual and framing. The display of the San casts, the diorama, the rock art exhibition and, in particular, the way in which the various elements of the displays are recontextualised are analysed in order to investigate the circulating discourses.

3.9 Ethical considerations

The material that is used as data is found in a public museum and is thus in the public domain and accessible to all. Upon enquiring about the use of data and the need to obtain permission when this research project began, the researcher was told that no permission is required by the Deputy Director of the Iziko South African Museum, as the museum and its holdings are public spaces and open to all. What is more pertinent to ethical considerations is the necessity of communicating about this data in a way which does not sensationalise it. It was important to be careful about the way in which the San were represented in this research so as not to represent them in a way of which this researcher is critical. The contentious and sensitive nature of the research material necessitated reflexivity by the researcher as well as consideration of her own position, professional and political beliefs in relation to the research material. The researcher needed to understand her position as an insider or outsider. As stated in the introductory chapter it is clear that as the researcher I could not become an insider. Berger (2013:220) states that researchers need to focus on self-knowledge and sensitivity and to monitor the impact of their biases, beliefs and personal experience. Given the nature of this research it was extremely important to not only remain sensitive to the ethical issues and considerations, but also to be constantly aware of my self-knowledge in relation to the ethical issues.

Reflexivity contributes to the quality control of qualitative research. In general, reflexivity entails continual internal dialogue and critical self-evaluation by the researcher who has to take responsibility for their own situatedness within the research and the effect it may have on the people being studied, the data that is collected and the interpretation thereof (Berger 2013:220). In this research it was necessary to take responsibility for being an outsider with regard to the researched and to be aware of the ethics around the interpretation of the data as an outsider, which in itself required great sensitivity with regard to the interpretation of the data.

3.10 In conclusion

This study uses a multimodal social semiotic theoretical framework and applies it to three-dimensional museum exhibitions, in so doing, contributing to research and knowledge of representation and recontextualisation in museums. This theoretical framework was augmented by readings on colonialism and decolonisation.

The readings on colonialism and decolonisation created a theoretical context against which to place and use the multimodal social semiotic framework for the analysis of the three exhibitions. The theoretical context created by these readings

made it possible to show that museums and their displays cannot be separated from their historical contexts and the way political ideologies and policies influenced not only the inception of the first public museums, but also their collection and display policies and practices. Because museums are not apolitical or neutral, a multimodal social semiotic framework on its own would not have enabled a full and nuanced analysis and understanding of the three exhibitions that are analysed and discussed in this research. In particular the theory on colonialism and decolonisation have made it possible to understand the importance of taking into consideration the political context of colonial countries, and the ideological influence of colonialism and the apartheid regime and how this came to be reflected in the three exhibitions and what they communicated to the general public. This makes this research relevant not only to the transformation in museums in South Africa but also in other postcolonial contexts where recontextualisation can inform their displays as well as their collection and display policies and practices.

The chapter has provided an overview of the research methodology and the research framework, with a focus on selection, arrangement and social relations. The next chapter presents a multimodal social semiotic analysis of the early exhibition in which the San casts were displayed, using the theoretical framework discussed here.

Chapter 4

The first moment in the display of the San

4.1 Overview

This chapter analyses the first moment of the display of the San in a natural history museum in order to investigate how representations are underpinned by socio-political ideologies and discourses of the time. There are four moments in the exhibitions of the San from 1911 and 1959, the erection of an exhibition panel intended to contextualise initial exhibitions in the late 1980s and the closure of this exhibition in 2001. The chapter begins with a discussion on the evolutionary discourse and ethnographic exhibitions. It shows how the evolutionary developed and then describes the origins of the project to make casts of the San in the early twentieth century. The first exhibition, the first moment, is described and analysed, showing how evolutionary theory influenced the way in which the casts of the San were displayed. This is followed by demonstrating how the evolutionary discourse is realised semiotically through selection and classification practices, which is followed by a discussion on how the viewer is positioned in relation to the exhibition. The chapter ends with discussion on the issue of race that is core to this exhibition.

4.2 Evolutionary discourse

Throughout the nineteenth century, colonial expansion allowed the development of disciplines such as archaeology, geology, palaeontology, natural history, ethnology and anthropology which had a deep impact on the Western perception of the world. Collections came to reflect the interests of European scientists, which in turn combined with the interests of the State, thus justifying colonial expansion through displaying the history of humanity according to narrative progress. Darwin's theory of evolution by which natural evolutionary development led from simple to more complex forms of life was applied to human matters (known as Social Darwinism) and European colonialism, presented as 'evidence' of progress for a natural stage in human progress. Darwin, at this time and writing in this socio-political context, was particularly influential in the shaping of the evolutionary view. His seminal work, *On the Origin of the Species*, was published in 1859. Charles Lyell, inspired by Darwin's

ideas, focused on archaeology and prehistory and wrote the text *The Antiquity of Man*, published in 1863. He was one of the first people to write about early man within an evolutionary structure. A number of evolutionary anthropological thinkers such as John Lubbock, Edward B. Taylor and Lewis Henry Morgan subsequently worked and published in this field. They codified the late nineteenth-century belief that human development progressed through a sequence of savagery through barbarism to civilisation, and that 'primitives' were relics of the earliest stages that could be studied in order to understand the history of mankind (Browne 2006:91). It is against this socio-political background that early exhibitions in museums were made, informed by Darwin's work on evolution.

South African museums were started in the nineteenth century during colonialism at a time in which there was a great interest in biological evolution, in particular with the spread of Social Darwinism, in which evolutionary ideology is applied to human groups constituted as races (Dubow 1989:2–3). Social Darwinism is the theory that individuals, groups and people are subject to the same Darwinian laws of natural selection as plants and animals. Now largely discredited, Social Darwinism was advocated by Herbert Spencer, a British philosopher, anthropologist and sociologist who coined the phrase 'survival of the fittest' in the late nineteenth century, which was later referred to as Social Darwinism. It was used to justify political conservatism, imperialism, and racism and to discourage intervention and reform (Browne 2006:105). The term itself emerged in the 1880s. Social Darwinism took the idea of success to justify social and economic policies in which struggle was the driving force. It was also intimately tied to national policies that were embedded in class, gender and racial distinctions. The notion of 'survival of the fittest' supported notions of social difference. Social Darwinism describes a range of social theories that encompasses the importance of struggle for existence in social life from around 1890 to 1940 (Browne 2006:105, 107). The term Darwinism was coined by Thomas Henry Huxley in his April 1860 review of *On the Origin of Species*, and by the 1870s it was used to describe a range of concepts of evolution or development, without any specific commitment to Charles Darwin's theory of natural selection (Browne 2006).

The ideology of biological racism came into being in the late nineteenth century and coincided with the rise of social imperialism in Europe and the emergence of segregationist thought in colonial South Africa (Dubow 1995:2). Darwin's notion of recasting human diversity into strictly evolutionary and biological terms reinforced nineteenth-century beliefs in racial superiority (Browne 2006:113). The biological sciences that were deeply embedded in evolutionist assumptions and the doctrine

of 'survival of the fittest' came to be applied to the human situation (Dubow 1989:2). The South African Native Affairs Commission of 1903 to 1905 played a vital role in the conceptualisation of what was to become the policy of racial segregation (Dubow 1995:12). In 1905 these racial theories were first discussed on a political level in South Africa (Coombes 2003:215). Dubow (1995:2) notes that biological racism came into being in the late nineteenth century and coincided with segregationist thought in South Africa. Institutional racism became government policy by 1910. At this time the scientific community believed that there was a direct link between physical type and evolution. This racially based ideology and the evolutionary discourse, in which biological racism could come to the fore, were dominant at the time the first exhibition was mounted in 1911. Evolutionary views gave powerful biological backing to those who wished to partition society according to 'ethnic difference' or promote white supremacy (Browne 2006:128). By 1905, in keeping with the belief in the scientific community that there is a direct correlation between physical type and evolution, physical anthropology became a dominating intellectual force (Coombes 2003:215). Physical anthropology at this time concentrated on racial origins, racial typology and evolutionary difference (Dubow 1995:13). Efforts were also made towards mounting 'ethnographic' exhibitions in museums in accordance with the systematic typologies and comparative classificatory mechanisms of the developing racial and anthropological paradigms of the time (Dubow 2006:58–59).

4.3 The San casts, display and race

By 1897 the ethnographic collections were considerable and an anthropology department was established (Summers 1975:13–14,64). The collection of the plaster casts of the San stemmed from the interest in physical anthropology by the director, Louis Péringuey, and was in keeping with collection practices of museums and the evolutionary view of this time. By the late eighteenth/early nineteenth centuries, when this view was dominant in museum practice, the study of mankind found expression in the establishment of ethnographic museums. As public institutions, ethnographic museums aimed to display peoples of the world in such a way as to make the difference in people visible – in keeping with Linnaeus' system of classification, making the people displayed appear 'other'. These modes of display were related to contemporary scientific theories, in particular Darwinian evolutionism (Bouquet 2012:65).

The sixty-eight casts of the San were made between 1907 and 1924 and were never intended for display. They were registered as 'specimens' in the physical anthropology collections of the museum, and were intended as archives, recording the physical

appearance of the San (Summers 1975:85). They were classified according to type, and meant as physical representatives of a group of people that were understood to be dying out.

Dr Péringuey, the director of the South African Museum, believed that the casting project reflected the international scientific interest in 'racial origins' of the time and the belief in the 'racial purity' of human types (Morris 2002:338). James Drury, the cast maker at the museum, on the instruction of Péringuey, travelled inland in search of San who would be suitable for life casts. The people who were cast were photographed naked, measured in anatomical detail and cast, using plaster of Paris, in line with anthropological practices of this time. Drury brought his field moulds of the San back to the museum's workshop where he cast the plaster figures and painted them based on the careful noting of the skin colour as instructed by Péringuey: Pay special attention to the … colour or expression of the eye … and above all copy the colour of the skin … (SAM letterbook 1908:718–720)

Drury made the colour chart of the skin tones of the various parts of the body for each individual (Davison 2001:13). Skin colour was considered to be a way to distinguish different races. In this sense, materiality is a key aspect of how evolutionary discourse was realised in these casts. The sign that is made by a sign maker gives us insight into their 'stance' in the world (Kress 2010:65). The sign makers who provided instructions for the making of the casts indicate the principles of the material representation of the San, given by Péringuey.

> Do not chose [*sic*] the two decrepit specimens. I would far prefer however to have those with all the wrinkles of the body, especially the belly, than to have them as well fed as our previous specimens.

Inscriptions were made on the material, the plaster of Paris, using a paintbrush as tool and paint as the material with which the inscriptions were made. The wrinkles on the stomach area to which Drury was asked to pay attention are an aspect of materiality. There is emphasis on the colour of the skin as can be seen in the statement 'verify your slab a couple of days after you have painted it in order to make *quite sure* of the genuine colour, giving the casts high modality' (Péringuey to Drury, SAM letterbook, 1908:718–1720). The focus on materiality, the wrinkles and colour, is evidence of scientific racism.

Although not intended for display, the casts were first exhibited and presented as generalised 'racial' types, objectivised and reduced to scientific 'objects' (Davison

1993:171, 173, 178). Displaying the casts as naked or near naked was an affirmation that they had been reduced to physical 'specimens', to be appropriated by the public's gaze (Davison 1991:156). The first exhibition in which the San casts were exhibited was constructed after Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* (1859) was published and emphasis first began to be placed on the veracity of science when the country was under British colonial rule. The San were to be studied 'scientifically' and captured in the life-like casts that were exact likenesses, including the accurate depiction of skin and eye colour, in the interest of science, and to be an exact record of the San. The first professional focus on early collections, which included ethnographic collections, began in the South African Museum with the establishment of a Department of Anthropology and Antiquities. In the early 1900s the scientific study of the San began in which there was a focus on racial origins and typology as well as evolutionary difference. At the time the San were seen as 'living fossils' that were physically distinct. This was considered scientifically important for the understanding of 'racial difference'. These notions are made explicit in a letter written by Péringuey to the Under Colonial Secretary of the Cape in 1907:

> Owing to the rapid disappearance by reasons which I need not mention here, of the pure specimens of the Hottentot and Bushman races the Trustees of the Museum are endeavouring to obtain models from the living flesh which would enable the exact physical reproduction of the survivors of these nearly extinguished races.

It was believed (at that time) that the San were dying out and that it was important to preserve information about them. The disappearance of the San was as a result of genocide, a term used by Adhikari (2010), which was couched in the phrase 'for reasons which I need not mention'.

The first exhibition of the San consisted of the casts that were exhibited in a glass case in the early twentieth century in the ethnology gallery in the South African Museum (figure 4.1). This photograph was taken by an unknown photographer and forms part of the museum's collections. It is possible that the photographer took this photograph from a particular angle to foreground certain aspects of the San, including physical features. On the wall behind the showcase are photographs of copies of San rock art and drawings which can be seen faintly. The figures are placed on plinths and are naked apart from the loin cloths made of skin, in which some of the figures were clad. The approximate age of the figures and the locality in which

FIGURE 4.1 Large showcase containing casts of San in an ethnography gallery (from Davison 2001:15)

each cast was made were given in the exhibition label. The casts of the San are three-dimensional signs that reflect the evolutionary discourse of the time in which they were made. The evolutionary discourse is also evidenced in the exhibition label which describes the physical features and 'racial' type of the San.

> CAPE BUSHMEN: The Bushmen of the Cape appeared to have been the purest-blooded representatives of the Bushman stock, much purer than those of the Kalahari and other more northerly districts. They are now practically extinct. They were light in colour and of small or medium height; the prominent posterior development (steatopygy)[1] of the women was a characteristic feature of the race.
>
> To anthropologists the Bushmen are one of the most interesting races in the world. There are strong grounds for accepting that they are of the same stock as the remote Upper Palaeolithic period. This cannot yet be definitely asserted but recent discoveries in North and East Africa have tended to strengthen the probability considerably.

Referring to the San as 'Cape Bushmen' and describing them as 'specimens', 'purest blooded representatives of Bushman stock, much purer than those of the Kalahari' and as 'living fossils' thought to be in danger of 'extinction', reflected in this label

1 The term is from the Greek στέαρ *stéar* meaning 'tallow' and πυγή *pugé* meaning 'rump'.

as 'now practically extinct', is evidence of the evolutionary discourse. The San were thought to be related to people from the Upper Palaeolithic period. This shows the widely held evolutionary view of this time that people were believed to be at different points of development on the evolutionary scale, and that the San were considered to be 'primitive' – akin to earlier people who lived in the Upper Palaeolithic era. As Erasmus (2008:169) noted, nineteenth-century geology introduced the idea of time as evolutionary and linear.

Evolutionary theory enabled a focus on 'difference'. Charles Darwin's theory of evolution provided a range of biological explanations for human cultural differences. As the power of scientific disciplines such as biology, natural history and ethnology increased, the San were increasingly regarded as anthropological 'specimens' (Davison 1991:142–143). The label describes the San in terms that make it clear that they are different and are described as an 'interesting race'. There is no disjuncture between the written text and the images of the San represented by the casts. By showing the casts posed in positions such as in readiness to shoot an arrow from a bow and walking holding a digging stick they are shown to be engaged in activities unlike those of the colonists, thus constructing the San as 'interesting' and 'different'.

What is not reflected in the label is that the San were being decimated by being driven off their hunting grounds and subsequently forced into labour on colonists' farms or to squat on the colonists' land. They were also decimated through armed conflict with these colonists. They were hunted by the colonists as were the animals they relied on for sustenance. As a result of this loss of land and extermination of the animals they relied on for food, the San who did not die at the hand of the colonists died of starvation (Skotnes 2007:64).

The director of the museum at this time, Dr Andrew Smith, did not dispute the widely held nineteenth-century view that the San were of the 'lower order of humanity'. Reference to 'purest-blooded' representatives of the Bushmen 'stock' has its origins in the casting project that aimed at making a physical record of members of a few remaining 'pure-bred' San (Davison 1993:166, 168). The search for so-called 'pure-bred stock' reflects the evolutionary and scientific paradigm. The reference to a 'pure-blooded specimen' also draws attention to the fact that the project was premised on the notion of racial purity and that, for scientific purposes, people could be dehumanised as objects that can be studied, as 'specimens' of their race.

The discourses surrounding the first exhibition were that the casts were value-free and scientifically neutral presentations rather than the ideologically loaded

representations that they were. The *Cape Times*, a daily newspaper, reported the following on 7 February 1925:

> The value of the plaster casts lies in their absolute impartiality, their pure and unadulterated 'objectivity'. They are the Bushmen themselves without a gloss of 'interpretation' or extraneous adornment…

The casts were considered to be scientifically accurate to show 'their absolute impartiality' and with 'pure and unadulterated "objectivity"', and ideologically neutral in the statement that the casts 'are' the San (Bushmen), they are shown to be without any 'interpretation' or 'extraneous adornment'.

Now I show more specifically the ways in which this evolutionary discourse is realised semiotically through selection and classification practices in the exhibition.

4.4 Ideational: evolutionary discourse as realised through classification and selection

Evolutionary discourse is realised through selection and classification. Classification is a social and semiotic practice that has the effect of stabilising the social world in particular ways (Kress 2010:122–123). Museums collect, select, classify, curate and then display artefacts. Classification as conceived by Linnaeus stressed difference in species. The classification underpinning the practice of ethnology in museums confirmed theories of race and culture, and physiognomy was often a powerful means of registering 'otherness' (Dubow 1995:23).

Classificatory practices can be seen in the representation of the San in the early 1900s when the first exhibition of the San casts was mounted. There was an accession register in which the casts of the San were classified under headings that gave the accession number (SAM NO) and the gender of each person, a description of the position in which the person was cast and the area in which they lived (see figure 4.2). Through the use of this 'scientifically' based classification system the San casts became no different to any natural history object classified and recorded in museum accession registers.

Figure 4.2 lists the body casts of the San and reflects the classificatory practice integral to both museum practice and the evolutionary paradigm. The San were regarded as faunal collections and accordingly could be treated as 'living fossils', to be appropriated for the advancement of science (Davison 1993:167). The dehumanised way in which the San were classified can be seen in the way in which they are listed not by name, but by an accession number, such as AP3391. They were then classified

TABLE 1

Body casts made by James Drury, 1907–1924, registered with the Physical Anthropology collections of the South African Museum.

SAM NO.	SEX	GROUP	DESCRIPTION	LOCALITY
AP3391	♂	Sarwa	Boy with bow and arrow	Kanye, Botswana
AP3392	♂	Sarwa	Sitting	Gaborone, Botswana
AP3393	♂	Sarwa	Looking at spoor	Gaborone
AP3394	♂	Sarwa	Pointing to spoor	Gaborone
AP3395	♂	River Bushman	Standing	Gaborone
AP3396	♀	Sarwa	Standing, holding baby	Kanye
AP3397	♀	Sarwa	Sitting	Kanye
AP3398	♀	!Kung	Old woman standing	Nuragas
AP3399	♀	!Kung	Sitting with son	Nuragas
AP3400	♂	!Kung	Sitting with mother	Nuragas
AP3401	♂	'Bushman'	Bust only	Otjito
AP3402	♂	'Bushman'	Bust only	Otjito
AP3403	♂	Nama	Standing	Grootfontein
AP3404	♂	'Bushman'	Holding a hare	Lake Chrissie, Transvaal
AP3405	♂	'Bushman'	Lifting arms	Lake Chrissie
AP3406	♂	'Bushman'	Holding a stick	Lake Chrissie
AP3407	♂	'Bushman'	Dancing	Lake Chrissie
AP3408	♂	'Bushman'	Sitting, pounding a bone	Lake Chrissie
AP3409	♂	'Bushman'	Boy standing, arms folded	Lake Chrissie
AP3410	♀	'Bushman'	Carrying a pot	Lake Chrissie
AP3411	♀	'Bushman'	Sitting	Lake Chrissie
AP3412	♀	'Bushman'	Sitting, stirring food	Lake Chrissie
AP3413	♀	'Bushman'	Bending forward	Lake Chrissie
AP3414	♀	'Bushman'	Standing	Lake Chrissie
AP3415	♂	Damara/Topnaar	Standing, with stick	Possession Is.
AP3416	♂	'Hottentot'	Half-reclining	Possession Is.
AP3417	♀	'Hottentot'	Standing, right arm raised	Possession Is.
AP3878	♀	Topnaar	Sitting	Possession Is.
AP3879	♀	/Xam	Walking, stick over shoulder	Prieska, Cape
AP3880	♂	/Xam	Bow in hand	Prieska
AP3881	♂	/Xam	Drawing bow	Prieska
AP3882	♂	/Xam	Sitting cross-legged	Prieska
AP3883	♀	/Xam	With digging-stick	Carnavon
AP3884	♀	/Xam	Sitting, digging	Prieska
AP3885	♀	/Xam	Standing with hands on hips	Prieska
AP3886	♀	/Xam	Standing, resting on stick	Prieska
AP3887	♀	/Xam	Pounding snuff	Prieska
AP3888	♂	/Xam	Bending forward	Prieska
AP3889	♂	/Xam	Squatting as if using fire-sticks	Prieska
AP3890	♂	/Xam	Standing, arm out-stretched	Prieska
AP3891	♂	/Xam	Crouching	Carnarvon
AP3892	♂		Crouching, arm out-stretched	Carnarvon
AP3893	♂	Nama	Boy sitting	Vosburg
AP3894	♂	/Xam	Boy playing musical instrument (gorah)	Upington (cast at Tokai reformatory)
AP3895	♀	/Xam	Reclining	Prieska
AP3896	♀	/Xam mother, Cape coloured father	Standing, right arm on hip	Victoria West
AP3897	♀	'Hottentot' mother, Xhosa father	Standing, arms extended	Britstown (cast in House of Correction, Cape Town)
AP3898	♀	? Hottentot or Bushman mother, Hottentot father	Standing	Britstown (cast in House of Correction, Cape Town)
AP3899	♂	Korana	Standing	Cast at Kimberley prison
AP3900	♂	Kgalagadi	Sitting, one knee raised	Kanye
AP3901	♀	Kgalagadi	Standing, carrying pot on head	Kanye
AP3902	♀	Kgalagadi	Kneeling, using pestle and mortar	Kanye
AP3903	♂	'Makua'	Standing, body cicatrized	Cast in Johannesburg
AP3904	♀	'Hottentot'	Head only	Bethany (cast in Windhoek prison)
AP3905	♂	Nama	Standing	Windhoek prison
AP3906	♂	Bondelswart	Head only	Bethany (cast in Windhoek prison)
AP3907	♂	Korana	Standing	De Beers Compound, Kimberley
AP3908	♂	Cape Hottentot	Boy standing, arm outstretched	De Beers Compound, Kimberley
AP3909	♂	Griqua	Standing as if in trance	De Beers Compound, Kimberley
AP3910	♂	Topnaar	Standing	Walvis Bay
AP3911	♂	Kgalagadi	Sitting, with outstretched legs	Gaborone prison
AP3912	♀	/Xam	Sitting on rock	Carnarvon
AP3913	♀	Auen	Sitting as if making ostrich egg-shell beads	Sandfontein
AP3914	♀	Auen	Sitting as if drilling bore in beads	Sandfontein
AP3915	♀	Naron	Standing, clapping	Sandfontein
AP3916	♀	Naron	Dancing	Sandfontein
AP4608	♀	Heikom	Standing, clapping	Grootfontein
AP4609	♂	Auen	Sitting as if making string	Sandfontein
AP4610	♂	? Bush	Walking	De Beers Compound, Kimberley

FIGURE 4.2 Details from the museum's accession register

according to gender, the area they were living in and the pose in which they were cast. In correspondence about the casting project there was reference to casting the San 'in the positions which they would naturally assume'. This can be seen in

phrases such as 'holding a stick', 'walking, stick over shoulder', and 'kneeling using pestle and mortar'.

Different groups of people were represented in these exhibitions, viewed as subordinate and classified into different groupings based on difference. The system of classification of 'ethnic groups' was based mainly on the language that was spoken by particular groups of San, and had political implications as classificatory divisions in museums were the same divisions that were later formalised by apartheid legislation through the Population Registration Act (Davison 1991:22). In the South African Museum, aside from the San casts, for example, casts of the different cultural and language groups of the country were also displayed in accordance with so-called 'ethnic divisions'. In the exhibition in which different groups of people were displayed they were divided into the Sotho, the isiXhosa, the isiZulu, and other language groups.

I have shown how evolutionary discourse was realised through selection and classification and have argued that classification formed part of evolutionary-based practices and informed the way that the casts of the San were represented. These classificatory practices stressed difference. The evolutionary discourse is refracted through the selection of the casts of the San in the following ways. The display of the casts was intended to show how the San were 'primitive' and 'different', which was made possible by the evolutionary belief of the time that people were at different points of development on the evolutionary scale. Europeans considered themselves to be at the apex of the evolutionary scale, thus superior and invested of power over those on the so-called lower end of the evolutionary scale. The display of the casts with a focus on physical characteristics and the description of the San as 'specimens' is evidence of this.

4.5 Interpersonal: how the viewer is positioned in the exhibition

In any given arrangement, salience can be an indicator of social significance or indicative of who or what is important (Kress 2010:131). This section argues that the San were exhibited in such a way that physical features were foregrounded and the viewer was positioned in a particular way. It shows how certain semiotic resources such as foregrounding and salience realise relations between the represented San and the viewer.

Any museum display projects a particular social relation between the producer, viewer and the objects that are represented. The interpersonal function realises meaning about the social relations of those who are in communication (Kress 2010:87).

A range of semiotic resources realise the complex and subtle relations between the elements represented in an image and the viewer. The viewer is thus placed in a particular viewing position to that which is represented. However, the viewer does not always have to accept the viewing position and brings to the experience their own interests and experience (Jewitt 2009:44). Viewers can be positioned in relation to exhibitions as more or less active or passive. In this exhibition, the viewers were positioned as outsiders looking in; the viewers were positioned as 'us' and those gazed at 'them'. Frames and framing devices are signifiers and have meaning potential. Frames make demands of viewers to attend to the entities within the frame that are connected as having unity and coherence (Kress 2014:73–74). They separate what is inside and what is outside the frame and ask of viewers to look at what is outside the frame as different to what is inside the frame. The framing of the glass display case thus both separates and unites. The way in which the San casts were displayed and framed focused attention on physical features through foregrounding and displaying the figures naked or nearly naked. By the early twentieth century when this exhibition was mounted racial stereotypes were embedded in the public imagination whilst the classification schemes that underpinned the practice of ethnology in museums confirmed and legitimised theories on race and culture. Ethnological museum exhibitions, such as this one, were primary sites for the popularisation of knowledge of other races, in so doing communicating the ethos of colonialism. The presentation of the San casts thus combined claims to scientific objectivity with the voyeuristic appeal of exhibiting casts of bodies naked as visual objects. By presenting the casts of different races as ethnological specimens the lines between scientific observation and voyeurism is blurred (Davison 2001:6). The casts of the San in the photographs (figures 4.1 and 4.3), were foregrounded in relation to the rock art on the wall of the exhibition space. The copies of the rock art on paper had no accompanying descriptive labels that described the symbolism of the images that were painted, or the spiritual complexity of the rock art of the San, relegating them to the status of 'decoration' and backgrounding their significance. The key to the figures that was placed below the descriptive label gave the approximate age of the subjects and the locality in which each cast was made.

The assigning of salience works at both the level of meaning and representation when there is foregrounding (Bezemer and Kress 2008:184). Salience in this exhibition (figure 4.3) is particularly given to the steotopygia through the way in which the women were positioned in the display case. The women were placed in a way that the steotopygia was foregrounded towards the viewer, whilst the gaze of the women

FIGURE 4.3 Photograph of figures in glass showcase in an ethnography gallery in the South African Museum circa 1915 (from Davison 2001:5)

was away from the viewer, focused ahead of them. The construction of meaning here is that the San belong to a particular race and there is a physical characteristic that is particular to this group of people. The figures were positioned to focus particular attention on the physique of the women who were represented as 'curiosities'. It can be seen that evolutionary discourse, which, as noted, underpinned colonialism with its emphasis on 'difference' and race influenced what was selected for foregrounding.

4.6 Race: past and present

The first exhibition has at its core issues related to 'race',[2] 'difference' and 'othering'. As argued by Nyamnjoh (2016:3), colonialism incorporated the racism of exploitation. The settler colonial situation made a race identity possible, with a corresponding ideology of white superiority. Race is at the core of the current call for decolonisation at higher education institutions. This shows that race has continued to be an issue

2 The word 'race' is a contested term and has therefore been put in inverted commas. For ease of reading, 'race' is note put in inverted commas hereafter.

since the colonisation of this country in 1652. According to Winant (2000:172), race at its most basic level can be defined as a 'concept that signifies and symbolises socio-political conflicts and interests in reference to different types of human bodies'. He argues that racial categorisation was a European invention, and was an outcome of the same world-historical processes that created European nation states and empires. In contrast, for Erasmus (2008:169) nineteenth-century biology was instrumental in defining 'man' as a species of the animal kingdom whilst, simultaneously, the discipline of geology introduced the idea of time as evolutionary and linear. This informed both evolutionary biology and physical anthropology. The idea of natural evolution shaped conceptions of human development as progressing in evolutionary fashion from 'primitive' to 'civilised'. This view was also used to explain human differences.

The modern idea of race emerged from the scientific discourses of lineage, origins and evolution within which the paradigm 'race' is understood as a biological fact intricately connected to hierarchically structured models of humanity and culture. It is within this framework that Khoesan peoples became 'specimens' used by the then mainstream scientists to prove the 'missing link' between apes and humans and the existence of 'primitive' human 'types'. Race became a marker of human superiority and inferiority (Erasmus 2008:170). In the early twentieth century, biological race theories became increasingly obsolete and a more sophisticated social scientific approach to race was adopted (Winant 2000 174–175). Challenges to this race science emerged after World War II when scientists declared race scientifically invalid (Erasmus 2008:171). In South Africa, however, as has already been mentioned, twentieth-century racial thinking about racial segregation was strongly influenced by nineteenth-century scientific ideas of race and human difference. Race, class and cultural nationalism all intersected in the apartheid project (Erasmus 2008:171), during which time the diorama was created. In South Africa white minority rule was perpetuated through settler colonialism which was largely achieved through segregation legislation. The ideology of segregation was institutionalised as apartheid in 1948, under white, specifically Afrikaner, rule. Apartheid was predicated on the separatedness of the races and attempted to exclude black South Africans from political representation, decision making and to exclude interrelations between different groups. Soudien (2015:5) makes it clear that apartheid normalised identity in 'racial' terms.

Erasmus (2008:169) asks why race continues to remain central in post-apartheid everyday life and consciousness, whether a future without race is possible, and whether race can be made to be less central. She argues that understanding race

as a social construct allows one to see the meaning of race change and that this conception allows for the possibility of the end of the use of this construct. This approach, philosophically and politically, would enable seeing ourselves as political beings struggling to become 'newly human'. From this perspective the future of humanity lies in the political choices we make and not in the hands of science and biology (Erasmus 2008:178, 179). With regard to political choices that are made, however, Alexander (2006:3) argues that it is irresponsible of political role models to refer to people unproblematically as 'Blacks', 'Indians', 'Coloureds' and 'Whites' in the public discourse as this perpetuates the racial categories of apartheid South Africa and entrenches racial prejudice. As discussed in the previous chapter, 'racial' categories are a biological construct that enables prejudice. Soudien (2012:18) similarly argues that despite important developments in the fields of sociology, anthropology, cultural studies and genetics, embodied and reified notions of race continue to dominate languages of description in many social and cultural settings. Despite the fact that race as an idea has been shown not to be true, it is still seen by many as an almost indispensable part of their identity and, consequently, of vocabularies and the framework of description and analysis of the politics of their everyday worlds. Soudien (2012:20) argues that we remain seduced by the idea of race. As important as the field of genetics is in confirming that racial genes do not exist, the idea that race is real and that it defines in 'objective' ways the basis of social relations between people, especially those deemed white or of colour, remains powerful. Erasmus and Soudien query what the hold is that race has on us even though Erasmus argues that the understanding of the concept of race will make it possible to end the use of this concept. Soudien (2012:21) suggests that race is the ultimate seduction in the process of making us feel connected to one another and in producing bonds of kinship and that processes of 'othering' remain. The idea of the social construction, which Erasmus refers to, is seldom deconstructed to understand how it works. For Soudien (2012:34) it is important that the term is deconstructed in order to understand the 'rule' that governs how it works and asks: 'How might the ideological "cage" of race be broken into and the demons in it released'. Alexander (2006:2) believes that 'there are still many people who hope that the post-apartheid dispensation will show the world that it is possible to open the way towards the realisation of a dream of a raceless, perhaps even classless, society'.

Erasmus argues for the 'unmaking of race', where race is not found in either nature or society, where race becomes a socio-historical and political construct that is culturally, contextual and situation specific. This view challenges the idea that race has a biological

or cultural basis, and that it is not a fixed thing to be found in DNA, nor is it something one is born with because of one's culture or heritage. This view opens the possibility of looking at 'where we are going' and 'who we are becoming, opening a path for unmaking race' (Erasmus 2008:178). In contrast Cloete (2014:39) argues that race and class still impacts heavily in the lives of the majority of black South Africans. Whilst not engaging directly with Erasmus, Cloete (2014:39) believes that the 'unmaking of race' that Erasmus argues for will not be realised in the near future.

The first exhibition of the San at the beginning of the twentieth century was strongly influenced by a biological view of race and by scientific racism. Museums have to become more aware of the discourses manifest in exhibitions, in particular, exhibitions that show indigenous peoples, and of the power they have to influence discourse. Museums need to take on the view propounded by Erasmus that race needs to be 'unmade'. Given that they are about classification, they are to be seen and represented as a social construct, which is influenced by politics and the context in which the displays are developed and mounted. In other words, how can museums, through exhibitions, contribute to the 'unmaking of race'?

4.7 Final comments

This chapter has shown how an evolutionary discourse arose from the scientific thinking in the early twentieth century and its influence on museums, and in particular on the first exhibition in which the San were represented. The chapter discussed the making of the San casts, through which the San were represented, and the ethos underlying the casting project. The exhibition was analysed and showed how the evolutionary discourse was realised through selection and classification, key to museum practice. The analysis also showed how the viewer was positioned in relation to the casts, what was considered salient and what was foregrounded and backgrounded, and how this influenced the way in which the representation of the San was viewed. The chapter ended with a discussion of race with the issues of difference and othering related to it, which lies at the core of the exhibition that was discussed.

The next chapter discusses the 'second moment' in the history of the representation of the San in the South African Museum – the diorama and the ecological discourse in which the diorama is framed. In looking at this exhibition, I will show how the evolutionary discourse is difficult to dislodge.

Chapter 5

The second moment: ecological discourse and the diorama

5.1 Overview

This chapter begins with a history of dioramas and then focuses on the diorama at the South African Museum, the second moment. This diorama is analysed and discussed and showed how the San were represented in an ecological paradigm and how the dominant discourse realised in this exhibition is an ecological discourse and how this discourse was realised semiotically. Next, the display recontextualising the diorama, the third moment, is discussed, and it is shown how a critical discourse can be seen in this display. This is followed by a brief section on the closure of the diorama to the public and how a discourse of transformation can be seen in this act. Mention is made of an exhibition at the South African National Gallery, *Miscast*, which contested the diorama. The representation the San, including that of Sara Baartman follows. This sculpture became symbolic of the representation of the San.

5.2 Origins of dioramas

Dioramas were introduced in 1822 by Daguerre (Kamcke and Hutterer 2015:10). Dioramas in museums were first created in the late 1800s (Kutner 2015:2). The word 'diorama' derives from the Greek words *dia* (through) and *horama* (view or vision). The word meant 'to see through the painted screen'. Dioramas were conceived to communicate narratives and primary experience in an immediate and immersive manner (Stylianou 2008:459, 468). They were a created scene on to which a narrative was projected. Habitat dioramas are three-dimensional museum displays that show mounted animals in natural settings against painted background landscapes intended to mimic the natural contexts of the animals they contain (Barclay 2015:2). Their integrated tableau of animals with their surroundings help to bring natural history to life (Wonders 2003:89). However, habitat dioramas were used not only to display animals, but were also used in 'ethnographic' displays, such as the San diorama. In the Smithsonian Museum the ethnology dioramas were geo-ethnic units and at the centre of each section was a family group purported to be representative of 'primitive' people prior to contact with 'civilisation'. Most habitat dioramas

showed families or groups of people of different genders and ages engaged in some characteristic activity illustrative of their lives (Arnoldi 1999:705).

5.3 The South African Museum diorama

The exhibition that is discussed in this section, the diorama, was mounted in 1959. At this time, scientific racism was largely discredited and race science was declared scientifically invalid (Erasmus 2008:171). This was just before dioramas started getting used to exhibit both animals and indigenous people in habitat groups, leading to groups like the San being studied in a more socio-economic and ecological context (Davison 2001:16). However, political segregation was being enacted legally and was becoming more entrenched. The Population Registration Act was legislated in 1950, which assigned every child born to a racial category. In 1950 the Group Areas Act was legislated which designated different race groups to particular areas. This Act was based on prior segregationist policies which were implemented at the beginning of the century. Practice in natural history museums, which in several instances included anthropological collections, now showed 'specimens' in habitat groups, or dioramas. The early exhibition of the casts was removed in the late 1950s just prior to independence and South Africa becoming a republic. Some of the casts were re-displayed in a diorama, this time against a background in which the focus shifted from racial typology to that of studying the San from an ecological perspective. At this time, the practice in natural history museums was to display artefacts in dioramas, hence the decision to exhibit the San casts in a reconstructed natural setting – the exhibition depicted a camp setting in the early nineteenth century (Davison 1991:158–159).

In keeping with the practice of displaying animals and indigenous people in habitat dioramas in natural history museums, the director of the South African Museum at this time, Dr Crompton, advocated a diorama to exhibit the San casts in a reconstructed natural setting (Davison 1991:158). This was reported in the press as follows:

> Cape Bushmen casts are to be removed from their glass cases to a special room now being prepared…, they will be seen against a colourful background of their natural environment as hunters, crude instrument makers and inhabitants of primitive shelters.
>
> (*Cape Times*, 4 September 1959, cited in Davison 2001)

Although James Drury cast sixty-eight people (SA Biographical Database of Southern African Science), as discussed in the previous chapter, only thirteen of the casts were

selected for the diorama. The casts that were not included have been stored in an area adjacent to the diorama, leaving all the original casts in close proximity. Only figures that were deemed to demonstrate the 'way of life' of the San were selected as the diorama was designed to illustrate hunting and gathering as a way of life of the San.

The casts used in the diorama were recontextualised in a nineteenth-century hunter-gatherer encampment in the Karoo, an arid area in the interior of the country, intended to evoke memories of a past way of life, bush craft and survival skills. In the diorama three women can be seen grouped together (see figure 5.1 on the left). One is sitting on a rock, one is standing and looking ahead of her and one is in a squatting position using a grinding stone. Three ostrich egg shells in a woven 'bag' are positioned next to the woman sitting on the rock. The ostrich egg shells and digging stick represent the work that women do – finding water and filling ostrich egg shells with water for later consumption and grinding bulbs and plants that women source. Behind these three women two female figures walking in the distance can be seen. In front of this is a female figure carrying a digging stick over her shoulder. Women are represented as responsible for gathering plants and bulbs and used a digging stick to dig up plants and bulbs. The woman standing with her hands on her hips looking ahead and the squatting figure appear to be looking at the figures walking in the distance.

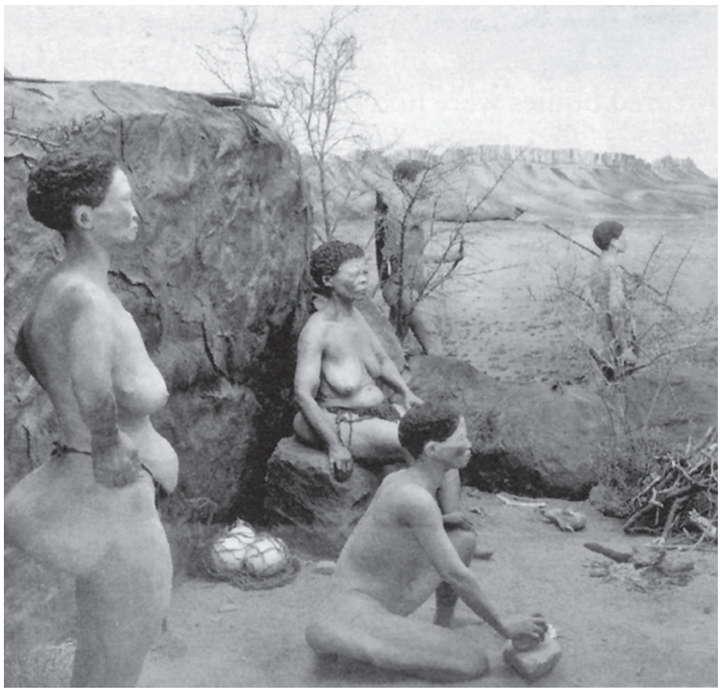

FIGURE 5.1 Figures of three women on the left side of the diorama (from Davison 2001:5)

To the right of the group of women (see figure 5.2) there is a male figure holding a bow and arrow as if poised to shoot at prey. In the foreground, an older male figure is shown starting a fire using a stick and a piece of wood, and there is an older woman resting in the shade provided by a grass mat structure. In the background an additional two figures can be seen walking. Material culture artefacts such as a skin bag hanging in a tree, a quiver, the ostrich eggs, the digging stick, grinding stone and the grass mat serve to demonstrate the way of life of the San.

FIGURE 5.2 The right side of the diorama

The meaning material selected for display in the diorama were the casts and the material culture artefacts that have been discussed. Selection at the level of display includes the choice of framing devices to make complete texts (Bezemer and Kress 2008:187). The casts in the diorama are framed very overtly by a display case that has a glass front. This separates the interactive participants, the viewers, from the represented participants, the casts, creating a distance. The San are framed in an ecological scene frozen in a time past that makes them appear to be 'other' in both time and space.

I now discuss the ways in which the diorama realises what I have called an 'ecological' discourse.

5.4 Semiotic realisation of ecological discourse in the diorama

'Ecological discourse' seems to be the dominant frame for views on the San at the time the diorama was opened. 'Ecological discourse' encompasses the notion that the San lived in close harmony with nature, given their hunter-gatherer lifestyle and their ecological knowledge (Van Vuuren 2009:558), which includes knowing which plants and bulbs were edible, which plants could be used for healing and which plants and insects could be used to make poison for the arrows with which they hunted. The ecological discourse is expressed in references to the San living close to

nature and 'living in harmonious balance with the environment' (Davison 2001:6), an organic culture that was well adjusted to meeting practical needs. A similar trope can be seen in Wylie's (1995:74) use of the term 'enterrment' – 'en-earth-ment' – when discussing the alignment of isiZulu king Shaka and the Zulus with the earth and with 'raw nature', which he argues puts them on a 'lower rung'. Similarly the association of the San with nature places them in alignment with nature; they are considered to have been at one with nature and they are considered still to be 'lower on the evolutionary scale' – on a 'lower rung'. They have been placed outside history by being represented as 'at one with nature'.

For the European the imagery of the African landscape was often expressed in terms of a 'lost Eden'. Africa, or Eden, became synonymous with a European sense of authenticity concerning nature and how people relate to nature (Wels 2004:78–79).

The Eden myth encompasses the views that the San were 'pristine hunter-gatherers' and that they were a symbol of natural purity. This was reflected in the San being described as 'primordial children of nature', 'remnants of a past era', people living in harmonious balance with nature and 'unspoiled by civilisation' (Davison 2001:6). This discourse also found its way into print through Laurens van der Post's work *The lost world of the Kalahari* (1958) and Elizabeth Marshall-Thomas' *The harmless people* (1959). These works appeared around the time the diorama was constructed. Van der Post portrayed the San as a 'symbol of natural purity' (Van Vuuren 2009:558), as 'the primitive' and 'the hunter gatherer' (Barnard 1989:104). The 'noble savage' was for the Europeans an idealised vision of the inhabitants of the New World. In the eighteenth century Jean Jacques Rousseau coined the term the 'noble savage, which was seen to be an illustration of freedom, simplicity and general closeness to nature. In the early nineteenth century Thomas Pringle, writing about the San, spoke of them as 'noble savages'. His poems show some features of the conventional 'noble savage', which was seen as a 'free and wild being who draws directly from nature which casts doubts as to the value of civilisation' (Voss 1982:23). The closeness to nature of the 'noble savage', which is how the San were reflected in the literature of Van der Post, can be seen in the literary idiom replete with natural imagery (Brown 1983:60). The majority of the films on the San over the last eighty years focused on the perceived value of the hunter-gatherer culture and ecological knowledge. This includes films such as *The Hunters* made in 1957 (John Marshall), *People of the Great Sandface* made in 1986 (Paul Myburgh) and *Beautiful People* made in 1974 (Jamie Uys).

A mythology of the San emerged as 'pristine hunter-gatherers' untouched by the 'encroachment of western civilisation' and as 'pristine primitives' (Van Vuuren

2009:558). The San became archetypes for humanity – a symbol of 'natural purity' in all mankind (Barnard 1989:104). The San were stereotyped as 'harmless people' (Barnard 1989:109) and 'innocent'. Reference is made to their 'child-like' nature. Dorothea Bleek – who lived for seven months with the San – comments – 'Nharo would beg shamelessly […] like the children they are […]' (Barnard 1989:109).

The ecological discourse constructs the way of life of the San as utopian, based on their living close to nature without influence from 'western civilisation'. It feeds on a feeling of nostalgia for the utopian way of life the San were believed to have lived. Utopian can be defined as 'modelled on or aiming for a state in which everything is perfect'. Linked to the utopian notion the ecological discourse is about a search for authenticity. It constructs the San as living in an authentic way, which is living close to nature and being in touch with nature. They were not represented in the diorama as they were at the time that they were cast (Coombes 2003:220), which was living mostly in abject poverty. The hunting and gathering lifestyle was considered to be authentic although by the time the colonists came into contact with the San they were no longer living in this 'authentic' and 'pure' lifestyle in which everything in nature was used and incorporated into their lives. By this time they had already come into contact with Bantu-speaking people and were trading for the clay pots the Bantu-speaking people were making.

The diorama is idealised; it depicts a scene that is not realistic. For example, the activities of grinding plant food, making a fire, resting in a shelter and aiming a bow and arrow at prey cannot all take place from within an encampment, nor do these activities occur simultaneously. The scene presents a landscape with an endless vista in which the represented participants are peacefully going about their activities of hunting and gathering in the distance under a perfect cloudless sky. The encampment is shown with grass, a tree for shade, a well-made shelter, ostrich eggs presumably filled with water and material culture artefacts such as a skin bag in perfect condition. Everything that is represented in this scene is neat and clean. There is no evidence of starvation, shortage of materials for adequate shelter, lack of water and prey, and bulbs and plants to be gathered for food nor exploitation by the colonists. The perfect sky with full sunshine adds to the idealised scene, which is frozen in time. There is no evidence of extreme heat or cold, which is what the weather in this area is like. The horizons and vistas in the diorama contribute to the creation of timelessness. As the scene appears to be timeless, so the San and their lifestyle is presented as being timeless, in both the diorama and in the Daniell painting that was made in 1805 (Davison 2001:16) (see figure 5.3).

FIGURE 5.3 'Bosjemans frying locusts' – Samuel Daniell, painter of natural history, 1805

In sum, ecological discourse comprises a view of harmony with nature, a notion of innocence and being 'untouched', a construction of the participants as 'child-like' and 'less developed', a utopian and idealised vision of society and hence a sense of nostalgia for what is lost. This is not a credible representation of the socio-political context in which the San lived. By the late nineteenth century the San had lost their social and cultural autonomy and had been dispossessed of their hunting and grazing grounds. A lot of the game they depended on had been hunted to extinction by the colonisers. By the early twentieth century the San who had survived the violence and disease that had reduced their numbers significantly were living in poverty and servitude (Davison 2001:10).

The woman photographed in figure 5.4, Janikie Achterdam, was one of the people who were cast in the casting project in the early twentieth century. In the diorama (figure 5.2) she is the older woman lying under the shelter resting. This image (figure 5.4) although also a representation, shows the circumstances in which the San lived as a result of their contact with the colonists, which rendered them impoverished. Contrary to the scene in figure 5.1, the shelter in which Janikie Achterdam lives is no longer made with materials made from nature, woven into mats to create a shelter. Instead, it is constructed of wood and sacking. The iron pot in front of the shelter would have been bartered or bought, probably brought from Europe. There is a tin with a lid and another container in front of the shelter, which are Western items brought by the colonists. No longer dressed in traditional clothing, Janikie is dressed in the Western style dress of the era when women wore long dresses. She is also wearing shoes made of skin that were worn by colonists at this time. The influence of the colonists can clearly be seen in the dress and the materials with which the shelter was made and the surrounding artefacts. The

FIGURE 5.4 Photograph taken by Dorothea Bleek of Janikie Achterdam in 1911, showing the conditions under which the San lived in comparison to what was represented in the diorama.

photograph also portrays something of the abject poverty the San found themselves in at this time.

Even though the exhibition of the San was framed in an ecologic paradigm, the way in which the San were displayed here continued to focus attention on 'difference.' The San continued to be displayed as a 'different racial type', in line with apartheid thinking that endeavoured to keep people separate at this time, and to have and maintain racial boundaries legalised by the Population Registration Act and the Group Areas Act of 1952. Whilst placing the diorama in an ecological paradigm, the evolutionary discourse was carried through and was manifest in the way in which the San were displayed as well as in the way in which they were stereotyped in the exhibition. 'The casts themselves perpetuated a stereotype of racial "primitiveness" that originated in the early accounts of indigenes at the Cape…' (Dubow 1995).

These views contributed to a false construct of the San that made it possible to continue to view them as they were framed in the evolutionary paradigm, as lower

on the scale of evolution. They were framed as 'pristine primitives' (Van Vuuren 2009:558). The San thus continued to be represented as 'other' in spite of scientific racism being largely discredited and evolutionary views becoming outdated. The ecological discourse did not displace the evolutionary discourse in its entirety and both discourses continue to be manifest in the diorama in complex ways.

The casts of the San were selected for display in a diorama with the intent of evoking memories of a past way of life. Recontextualising the casts of the San to refract an ecological discourse that encompassed the notion that the San lived in close harmony with nature as a result of their hunter-gatherer lifestyle and ecological knowledge is realised in part only in the diorama as they are framed to appear to be 'other', which is reflective of an evolutionary discourse. Inherent in the San being framed as 'other' and in the description of the San in the label as 'crude instrument makers' and 'inhabitants of primitive shelters' is the power of the sociopolitical context of the time in which the San are still considered to be 'primitive'.

The next section discusses the recontextualisation of the diorama through the erection of display panels next to this exhibition.

5.5 Recontextualising the diorama, a critical discourse: the third moment

In the early 1980s the descriptive label of the diorama was altered to reflect the notion that the diorama represented a camp scene from the early nineteenth century, placing it in an historical context for the first time. As the political landscape in the country started changing at this time, bringing with it an imperative for museums to transform, the diorama became a focus of questions within parliamentary committees. The Minister of the Arts and Culture, responsible for the funding of national museums, had to respond to assertions that the diorama was racist and that it dehumanised victims of racial oppression. At this time a state of emergency had been declared in the country and there were intense protests, which included protesting against racial discrimination and oppression.

Against this background of increasing public awareness of the history of the diorama, in an attempt to stimulate discussion on the commodifying of the San in academic and popular discourse, and to create greater critical awareness, the museum placed an exhibit next to the diorama in the late 1980s that showed how it was produced. This display also included newspaper articles that reflected some of the debate over the representation of indigenous people in general and around the diorama itself. After this exhibit was added, panels were erected in the display area showing, inter alia, photographs of the living conditions in which the San who were

cast found themselves and also of publications from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries that illustrated the perspectives and attitudes of the times towards the San (Davison 1991:163–167).

This attempt to recontextualise the diorama was done in order to provide some explanation of the socio-political context in which the diorama was constructed, and documented some of the histories of the individuals whose bodies were cast (Lane 1996:4). According to Dubin (2009:57), this 'recontextualisation' of the San through these two small exhibitions reflected a more critical discourse around the ethics and unequal power dimension involved in the display of human beings, as well as a growing respect for indigenous peoples and their cultures; inert figures were 'fleshed out'. It was envisaged that through this recontextualisation of the diorama, public awareness of the history of the diorama would be increased, and that some of the comments would stimulate discussion about the way the San 'have been commoditised in both public and popular discourse' (Davison 1991:164–165). Davison also believed that the addition of an exhibition that attempted to recontextualise the diorama had the potential to make explicit the assumptions and value judgements that underlie museum practice. Davison further argued that the information contained in the proposed exhibition would open the concept of neutrality in museums to the public for discussion (Davison 1991:164–165).

In May 1989 Davison, head of the African Studies Department, and anthropologist Gerald Klinghardt submitted a memorandum to the Director of the museum, 'Rethinking the "Bushman" Diorama' in which they argue for providing more historical information on the people depicted in the diorama, as well as on the casts and their display at the museum. The objective was to focus attention on the history of the people Drury cast, and to create an awareness that a museum exhibition is an interpretation subject to existing theories and is therefore open to discussion. The suggestion reflected in this memorandum was approved and later in the year this exhibition was mounted (Davison 1991:164–165).

Five explanatory panels were erected next to the diorama (see figure 5.5). In the first panel a photograph of the diorama was mounted that was accompanied by a caption that placed the camp scene in an historical context by pointing out that the figures were cast in the early twentieth century when it was thought the San were becoming 'extinct', and that this scene depicts a camp scene in the Karoo in the late nineteenth century. The second panel showed photographs of some of the San Drury cast in Prieska in 1911; other photographs showed their living conditions at the time they were cast. There were photographs of how the casts of these people

were made as well as images of anthropological studies of them. Brief biographies of the people who were cast were also provided. This panel intended to point to the notion that the San were represented in exhibitions as objects. A third panel showed photographs of how the casts were displayed at the museum over time. The fourth panel intended to be academic and showed how the San had been depicted in ethnographic writing. The final panel displayed copies of critical and controversial views that had been published (Davison 1991:166–167).

The first panel comprised a large photograph of the diorama with a caption which read as follows:

> This display, constructed in 1959, has become one of the major attractions of the South African Museum. It depicts an encampment of nineteenth century hunter-gatherers in the Karoo. The figures, however, were made in 1911 when it was known that the 'Bushmen' were becoming extinct.

The text offers information about the diorama. The written text notes that the casts were made when it was thought that the San were dying in large numbers. It is notable how, even though this exhibition intends to recontextualise the diorama and

Fig. 30. Documentary display 'About the Diorama'. (Photograph: J. Hosford, South African Museum.)

FIGURE 5.5 Panels containing information that aimed to recontextualise the diorama and create a critical dialogue (This poor quality image is all that is available. It does limit interpretation.)

create a critical dialogue around it, the San continue to be 'othered' through the use of, for example, the word 'extinct', which is redolent of the evolutionary discourse that underpinned the first exhibition of the San. The reasons for the San dying in large numbers are, once again, not given.

The next panel aims to give insight into the social history of the San who were cast (Davison 1991:165). As noted, in the late nineteenth century most of the San were no longer living as they were depicted in the diorama, living instead in poverty as demonstrated by the photograph in figure 5.4. This panel shows photographs of the San who were cast in 1911. These figures contrast with the idealised camp scene depicted in the diorama. The texts on this panel read:

> By 1911, when the casts were made for the Museum, people in the Cape who had formerly lived by hunting and gathering had become shepherds and labourers on farms, or were working as servants in villages. Some of these people living in Prieska were identified as 'pure Cape Bushmen' on the basis of their language and physical features.

The written text above was constructed by museum professionals to be read by visitors to the museum. The images, such as figure 5.4, begin to construct a critical discourse by illustrating the actual conditions in which one of the San who was cast was living when the casts were made. The critical discourse is evidenced in acknowledging this in the written labels in the display, and acknowledging that academic texts and prevailing views influenced the way in which the San were represented over time. It is also shown through the San being placed in an historical context. There is still reference to the San being 'pure Cape Bushmen' albeit that this categorisation was now made in part on the basis of language. Physical features remain a focus, which carries through vestiges of the evolutionary discourse.

In the third panel the different ways in which the San casts were exhibited in the past were shown. The panel was headed, 'How the casts had been exhibited'; again this is text that informs. The written texts included: Over the years the casts which were made for the Museum between 1908 and 1911 have been displayed in different ways, reflecting the prevailing academic perceptions of people called 'Bushmen'.

In this text, reference is made to prevailing academic perceptions. These were the perceptions of anthropologists and museum scientists and were manifestations of evolutionary and ecological paradigms. In this text the word 'Bushmen' is put in inverted commas. By doing so the word is imbued with a political meaning. It gives

recognition to the notion of the San being victims of the beliefs that underpinned the various political regimes over time. It also demonstrates the recognition that the San had been misrepresented and treated in a most inhumane manner.

Further texts in this panel include the following:

> In the earliest displays the casts were used to illustrate the typical physical characteristics of the 'Bushmen' as a primitive anthropological type occupying a lowly position on the evolutionary scale.
>
> Later the figures were grouped according to geographical region and language, in an attempt to demonstrate theoretical links between physical type, language and culture.

In the first written text, physical characteristics were highlighted and reference is made to the San being a 'primitive anthropological type occupying a lowly position on the evolutionary scale'. By noting this in the text, a critical discourse is being engaged in and this language is being critiqued – the language used in the evolutionary discourse. The second text demonstrates the beginnings of thinking differently and critically about the foregrounding of the physical characteristics of the San by grouping them geographically and according to language as reflected in classificatory practices of the time.

The fourth of the five panels headed 'How writers created the "Bushmen"', is more academic in intent and aimed to draw attention to how the San were commoditised in ethnographic writing (Davison 1991:166). This was done through the display of covers of publications dating from the nineteenth century to the present in order to show changing perspectives and attitudes. The first of the three texts that accompanied the covers of the publications read:

> 19th and early 20th century
>
> The earliest studies of 'Bushmen' were mostly based on travellers' reports and a limited amount of fieldwork. They put forward the view that the 'Bushmen' were living examples of primitive people and thus 'ancestral' to modern civilisation.

The narrative in this text reflects the evolutionary discourse of the time in which the casts were made by the reference to the view that the San were 'living examples of primitive people and thus "ancestral" to modern civilisation'. The next written

text communicates the ecological paradigm in which the diorama was constructed as demonstrated through the statement 'A romantic vision of "Bushmen" as children of nature merged in both academic and literary works'. The final text in this panel read:

> 1970 onwards
>
> During the past two decades earlier views have been rethought and set in historical context. It is now recognized that the hunting and gathering way of life was never static but has always been part of wider ongoing social and political processes.

The discourse in this text acknowledges that previous views, the evolutionary and ecological paradigms, needed to be rethought and the San set in a more carefully considered historical context. It also takes cognisance of the fact that the hunting and gathering way of life was socially situated and part of ongoing political processes.

The final panel presented critical and controversial published responses to the diorama and asked visitors to fill out a short questionnaire. Issues in the exhibition that were considered critical related to the ethnographic presentation of cultural 'others', the power of museum professionals to appropriate, classify and represent people in the name of science and the privileging of certain interpretations of the San and the exclusion of aspects of the San history (Davison 1991:167).

Texts are material objects that result from a variety of representational practices that make use of different signifying systems, each of which contributes to meaning in their own way. Representational practices differ with regard to the degree to which the materiality of the text plays a role in semiosis. A representation of the world of the San in this exhibition is made through the visual and verbal modes – through photographs and written text. The meaning potential lies in these modes. The verbal mode made it possible to describe in the written text and to give meaning to the images and photographs in the exhibition. Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996:12) state that sign makers choose an aspect or bundles of aspects of the object to be represented as being the most criterial for what they want to represent and then choose the most apt form for its representation. The first exhibition and the diorama are no longer available to view, thus I chose the most apt form to represent these exhibitions – photographs of the original exhibitions. These are visual representations which make it possible to analyse the exhibitions. I have also analysed the painting by Daniell (figure 5.3) to discuss the San and to analyse the diorama as no other detailed representations of the diorama exist. The photographs have the same representational potential as the

exhibitions themselves. The photographs, as with the exhibitions, have maximum representation of full pictorial detail (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2006:161). However, the photographs are two-dimensional, not three-dimensional, representations, which according to Hall (2000:19) is not exactly like the real thing. The photographs of the exhibitions are, however, as close to the actual exhibitions as it is possible to get as there are no other resources available.

I have shown that the visual and verbal modes, through which materiality is expressed, each contribute to meaning in their own way, and that these modes together have produced a particular representation of the San.

In the next section the fourth and final moment is discussed in which I argue that the need for transformation in the museum and heritage sector informed the closure of the diorama. The critical discourse that underpinned the creation of this exhibition and informed this exhibition led into the discourse of transformation that began to inform museum practice.

5.6 Closing the diorama, discourse of transformation: the fourth moment

The closure of the diorama in April 2001 was linked to the need for transformation in the heritage sector. It was also seen as symbolic of the restoration of the dignity and humanity of the San. At an event to celebrate Heritage Day in September 1997 at which President Nelson Mandela opened the Robben Island Museum, he critiqued Iziko museums. This critique included Mandela's statement that 'ninety-seven per cent' of museum exhibitions reflected colonialist and apartheid points of view. The President demanded that museums 'reflect the democratic ideals of and the experiences of the bulk of the population, and not simply focus on a privileged few'. He asked: 'Can we afford exhibitions in our museums depicting any of our people as lesser human beings, sometimes in natural history museums usually reserved for the depiction of animals?' and 'Can we continue to tolerate our ancestors being shown as people locked in time?' (Mandela in Dubin 2009:2). It is clear that the last question referred to the diorama and that the museum was seen to be relegating the San to the status of animals. Prior to the closure of the diorama, following the criticism of it by President Mandela, a conference entitled Khoisan Identities and Cultural Heritage was attended by hundreds of people of Khoesan (Khoekhoen and San) descent. During the conference the closure of the diorama was debated, resulting in varied opinions. Whilst many delegates appreciated the lifelike quality of the casts, some noted that the diorama represented a static and oversimplified depiction of the past, and there were comments about the exhibition not addressing issues during the

period in which the diorama was located and the present. The issues that emerged as more important than the diorama, however, included land rights. It also became clear that, contrary to some assertions that it was demeaning for the San to be depicted in a natural history museum, the /Khomani San, headed by Dawid Kruiper, leader of the Khomani San in the Kalahari, claimed an affinity to nature as an affirmation of San identity (Davison 2001:2).

Whilst the charge that the San were displayed with animals could be seen as apt, it must be noted that the removal of the colonial history collections was more complex than the issue of animals and indigenous people being represented in the same museum. Since its inception the Iziko South African Museum had been a general museum, containing collections of palaeontological specimens, minerals, fauna, anthropological collections and marine collections. Space had also become a problem in the past when collections from this museum became too large to be housed in one building. The early museum collections were first housed in the public library, and subsequently a portion of land in the botanical gardens was granted for the erection of a library and a museum. This building was divided into two parts, in 1860 housing library and museum collections respectively (Summers 1975:44). In the early 1960s the museum holdings could no longer be housed in the museum due to a shortage of space. A decision was taken to move the colonial collections to another building, which became the South African Cultural History Museum, now the Iziko Slave Lodge, leaving the anthropological and natural history collections in the South African Museum building. This left the San exhibition in a museum that displayed natural history specimens, resulting in the critique levelled by President Mandela.

The closure of the diorama opened space for public debate about representation in museums, confirming that the representations of the past are always contingent on the politics of the present (Davison 2001:16–17). It is also in this political context in which museums were responding to the necessity for change that Pippa Skotnes' exhibition *Miscast* opened at the Iziko South African National Gallery in 1996. Prior to the closing of the diorama Skotnes conceived the *Miscast* exhibition to, inter alia, contest the diorama. Skotnes re-presented the people who had been curiosities, 'subhumans' and 'living fossils' in a nuanced and personal way (Dubin 2009:62). Amongst the motivating factors for the conception of this exhibition according to Skotnes (2001:312) was the abyss between the diorama and the Bleek and Lloyd archive as well as the narrative power of the form of display manifest in the diorama. The intention of this installation was twofold: to confront the diorama visually and to put the Lloyd and Bleek archive and material from the storerooms of the Iziko South

African Museum on display (Skotnes 2001:312). Structured around two oppositions, one figured contrast between storage and display and the other contrasted colonial images of the San and those created by the San themselves. The artefacts that made up this installation included separate parts of body casts, all headless. These casts were made from the original moulds made by James Drury, signifying nameless individuals reduced to racial types, inter alia, in the display of the San. Other artefacts included cabinets containing instruments associated with nineteenth and early-twentieth century physical anthropology.

In *Miscast* there were thirteen resin casts of headless body sections that had been made in 1980 and additional casts of body parts were exhibited in piles as were fibreglass casts of 'trophy heads' of the San (Dubin 2009:65–66). This exhibition contested the diorama in several ways. Whereas the diorama is a static depiction of an idealised way of life, *Miscast* was dynamic in that it incorporated multiple perspectives, involved several media and sensory experiences and required the audience to interact with the components of the exhibition. Further, whilst the diorama ignores the brutal way in which the San were treated, this history was interrogated by this exhibition. What is important to note is that it was legal to hunt the San and that they were viewed by the European colonists as 'varmints' and 'intruders'. As was noted earlier, the San were viewed at the time they were cast as 'living fossils' and it is these casts that could be seen in the diorama. It is the way in which the San are depicted in this exhibit that critics of the diorama considered to be a perpetuation of the archaic racial stereotypes. *Miscast* also brought to the fore the issue of cultural ownership, that is, who has the right to speak for whom (Dubin 2009:62).

Before, around and after the closure of the diorama the focus was on transformation in the heritage sector. The diorama was closed to the public, with the intent of making it possible to reconsider how the San casts could be presented in future. It has been boarded up and remains out of view of the general public. The exhibition and the casts are considered to be spectral as they remain untouched as is, out of sight of the general public. I use the word 'spectral' in the sense that the casts remain ghostlike – they remain ever present as if in our unconscious collective memory as a reminder of the way the San were treated, viewed and exhibited.

This section has discussed the diorama, the recontextualisation of the diorama, the *Miscast* exhibition and the closure of the diorama. What follows is discussion on the representation of the San, focusing on how Sara Baartman was represented.

5.7 Ongoing conversations about representing the San

In this section I explore this representational trope by looking at the representation of one particular woman, Sara Baartman, who became a victim of colonialism and the racial science of the time. Sara Baartman, a young Khoisan woman, was taken and exhibited in London and Paris, billed as the 'Hottentot Venus'. Sara Baartman went to England in 1810 with her employer, Hendrik Cesars, and William Dunlop, an English doctor. They showed her for money on the London stage. After Dunlop's death she was taken to France by Henry Taylor who continued to show her on stage. Baartman died in Paris in poverty of an unknown disease in December 1815. Her remains were repatriated to South Africa in 2002 and buried on Woman's Day.

Baartman's skeleton and body cast were displayed at the Museé de l'Homme Naturelle de Angers and later at the Museé de l'Homme in Paris until the 1970s. Her remains were displayed for more than one hundred and fifty years – coinciding with the time in which the San casts were displayed in the first exhibition (1911–1959) and in the diorama (1959–2001). Baartman's body cast and skeleton were displayed facing away from the viewer in order to emphasise her steotopygia.

In chapters 4 and 5 the representation of the San was discussed both generally and in the way in which they were represented in the first exhibition and in the diorama. I have shown how Sara Baartman was represented. What follows is a discussion of how the statue of Sara Baartman continues to represent the contested nature of the representation of the San.

The sculpture of Sara Baartman, which is in the Chancellor Oppenheimer library at the University of Cape Town, was made by artist Willie Bester in 2009. This statue became one of the points of focus in the student protests that commenced in March 2015, namely, the Rhodes Must Fall movement. I discuss the sculpture of Sara Baartman and the student protests to demonstrate that, whilst treated in the same way as the San, struggles over the representation of black bodies continue. This was expressed in different ways in the student protests, in part to make the point that the representation of people is political. The student protests were originally directed against a statue on the campus that commemorates Cecil John Rhodes. The campaign to remove the Rhodes sculpture from the university's campus led to a movement to 'decolonise' education across South Africa and 'transformation' at the university. The university Council vote approved the removal of this statue, which was done in April 2015. The Rhodes Must Fall movement was considered to be a 'collective movement of students and staff members mobilising against the reality of institutionalism at the University of Cape Town'. The Rhodes statue was a symbol of Eurocentric

narrow-minded racism and a way of drawing attention to the unfinished business of transformation beyond symbols. The statue was a trigger point for a broader unhappiness about race, racism and marginalisation at the university. The statue was seen by some as a symbol of oppression and white privilege. The students were protesting to challenge 'the silencing of black students' in colonial institutions that no longer had a place in post-colonial and post-apartheid South Africa (Nyamnjoh 2016:84, 85, 86, 97, 146). The movement grew to encompass institutional racism, the lack of racial transformation at the university and access to tertiary education and university accommodation. These protests quickly spread to other South African universities and to Oxford University, and continued throughout 2015 and 2016. This enacted what Maldonado-Torres (2016:4) argued: decoloniality is a direct challenge to the modern/colonial world and its institutions, including the university and the state. The student protests of 2015 and 2016 represent an attempt to participate in social, economic and cognitive decolonisation. A petition was circulated that stated: 'We demand that the statue of Cecil John Rhodes be removed from the campus of the University of Cape Town, as the first step towards the decolonisation of the university as a whole' (Mamdani 2016:68).

In March 2015 a group of students belonging to the Rhodes Must Fall movement made a declaration about the statue of Sara Baartman, using performance art. Their piece looked not only at the way in which Sara Baartman was objectified, but at the objectification of women in general. The performance piece also spoke against the sexually distorted representation of black women. Towards the end of the performance the dancers clothed the statue of Sara Baartman as a means of reclaiming her dignity (Tribe, https://odwag.wordpress.com). The students taking part in the performance painted themselves black, wore only loincloths and chains and walked in silence to where the statue stood. One of the performers stated that

> 'We reject her presentation in the library, we reject that her standing naked commemorates her and retains her dignity. Further, we see no difference in the racist, sexist methods used by the British and the French in the freak show attraction, than her presentation in the UCT Oppenheimer library. Thus we aimed to: illustrate that the violent objectification and sexualisation of the black body is a system, which feeds into the stereotype of racial superiority so subtly and insidiously that it is hard to detect even by those bodies it represents in real life. So our aim is to challenge a history that represents us as a fetish, as base sexual beings. There are particular ways in which Saartjie

> (Sara) Baartman's spirit and legacy can be contextualised and respected. Thus in our climactic end, we draped her and covered her, hoping to show that these violences inflicted on the black body and psychology still continue and we will not stop until we decolonise the black body and mind'
>
> (Naidoo, October 2015, presentation at National Higher Education Transformation summit)

The 'difference' of Sara Baartman became signified through her sexuality in which she was reduced to her body and her body in turn reduced to her sexual organs, which stood as signifiers of her place in the universal scheme of things. The Sara Baartman statue is exhibited at the top of a flight of stairs. The statue is situated in such a way that she is seen from the front, and not from the back or the side as the casts of the San women were displayed and in the way Sara was depicted in posters and cartoons, with a focus on her steotopygia. The statue was, however, of a naked Sara, which some argue is no different to the way the San casts and Sara were exhibited, in the case of Sara both live in freak shows and in the way her body cast was displayed in the Natural History Museum in Paris. It is only after the performance art piece was staged during the protest movement that this statue was draped with black fabric, hiding her nakedness. This action is similar to what was done with the San casts in the diorama, which were exhibited for some twenty years naked, after which they were clothed in loin cloths and cloths draped around their shoulders.

The first section of this chapter discusses the representation of the San in the diorama in which it was shown that the focus remained on the physical characteristics of the San, even though they were being represented in an ecological paradigm and that race remained a focus of the representation of the San as it did in the first exhibition. The section on the recontextualisation of the San attempts to draw attention to the fact that the San were represented as a trope in the diorama, yet does not draw attention to the notion that the San remained represented as 'other' and as of a different race. The discussion on Sara Baartman showed how a focus on physical characteristics and the focus on race formed the essence of how she was represented in shows in England and France. When the sculpture of Sara Baartman became symbolic of the representation of the San during the Rhodes Must Fall student protests, it became apparent that the representation of the San continues to be contentious.

FIGURE 5.6 Sculpture of Sara Baartman in the Chancellor Oppenheimer Building at the University of Cape Town (2017)

5.8 Final comments

Using Bezemer and Kress' (2008) framework for recontextualisation this chapter has argued that the representation of the San in a South African museum reflected the prevailing discourses of socio-political contexts over time. The evolutionary discourse reflected the scientific views and practices of scientists such as anthropologists of the time, who considered the San to be 'scientific specimens'. These 'specimens', in accordance with Linnaeus' classificatory system that was adopted by museum professionals and scientists, classified the San according to 'racial' difference and physical features. Within museum practice the evolutionary discourse then gave way to the ecological discourse. Ecological discourse involves the classification of a lifestyle, whereas evolutionary discourse involves the classification of 'types'. Evolutionary discourse 'others' the San in terms of the form and shape of bodies and ecological discourse 'others' the San in terms of time and place. Evolutionary and ecological discourses both rely on representations of the body (either in nature, or as 'types').

However, as demonstrated, vestiges of the evolutionary discourse remained and can be seen in practices such as classification that is reflected in the way the casts were displayed in the diorama. With the decision to recontextualise the diorama, informed by the belief that the museum was perpetuating stereotypes with the display of the San in the diorama and political changes in the country, a more critical discourse began to emerge. This critical discourse gave way to a discourse of transformation at a time when there was a call for transformation in museums and in the heritage sector. The exhibition intended to recontextualise the San and create a critical discourse that can be viewed as a move towards transformation in the museum sector and the subsequent emergence of a discourse of transformation. This discourse was reflected in the closure of the diorama to the public and in the intent to debate the future of the diorama and the display of the San culture, including with descendants of the San.

The next chapter looks at how acknowledging complexities of representing a group of people resulted in a very different kind of exhibition, one that actively worked against the dehumanising 'scientific' and classificatory discourses, rather concentrating on spirituality, ambiguity, the unsayable – all unclassifiable by nature. However, it will be seen that evolutionary discourse, despite the intentions of this display, continues to haunt the representation of the San.

Chapter 6

/Qe – the power of rock art exhibition

6.1 Overview

This chapter looks at the final exhibition, */Qe – the power of rock art*. This exhibition was mounted in post-apartheid South Africa in 2003, when political, social and cultural transformation became a crucial discourse of public life. This discourse of transformation included the questioning of museums and their exhibitions, in particular those exhibitions reflective of colonial history. The chapter analyses different parts of the exhibition, including the welcome panel, a map of Africa, a reconstruction of a rock shelter and a video of trance dancing. The analysis focuses on discourses manifest in this exhibition: the discourse of transformation as realised through spiritual and scientific discourses.

Transformation is defined by Reddy (2008:209) as denoting a change from one qualitative state to another, and as usually implying 'improvement'. Used in South African politics, the term 'transformation' embraces diverse meanings in competing discourses of social change, and occupies centre stage in the political terrain. In a South African context the replacement of the previous apartheid regime by a government representing the majority led to organised state racism being overthrown, surfacing notions of transformation (Reddy 2008:9). The discourse of transformation in this museum exhibition reflects the political changes taking place. However, this chapter shows how traces of the evolutionary discourse in which the San are constructed as 'different' still remains to an extent. This dialogue between discourses and traces of discourses is of interest within the museum context as well as other contexts of transformation. In spite of attempts to transform through reclaiming dignity, the museum is still shown to be an institution in which practices such as classification, reminiscent of colonialism and evolutionary thought can be seen.

6.2 Background to the /Qe – the power of rock art exhibition

In his address at the opening of the Robben Island Museum in 1997 (discussed in chapter 5), President Mandela noted some of the challenges of the processes of transformation in the South African museums and the heritage sector.

> During colonial and apartheid times, our museums and monuments reflected the experiences and political ideals of a minority to the exclusion of others. Most people had had little or no say in the depiction of their history […] Of our museums all but a handful […] represented the kind of heritage which glorified mainly white and colonial history.(cited in Corsane 2004:6)

This statement is an apt representation of the way in which the San casts had been exhibited in earlier exhibitions. Whilst an idealised camp scene from around a hundred years ago was depicted, the San at this time were being dispossessed of their land, were being exterminated or lived in abject poverty, often in servitude. Colonial ideals were reflected in the evolutionary discourse that underpinned the first exhibition, which was evidenced in the depiction of the San as 'other' and as a group of people going 'extinct.' In the diorama they continued to be depicted as 'other' in spite of this exhibition no longer being underpinned by an evolutionary discourse that placed a focus on racial difference.

Kress (2010) notes that discourse deals with the production and organisation of meaning from an institutional position. Knowledge is shaped in particular institutions and from the perspectives of particular institutions. Similarly Gee (1985) argues that discourses are the voices of institutions. Museums, as institutions, were transforming from the 1980s in South Africa during which time significant conferences, meetings and communication took place (Corsane 2004:7). It is in this context the */Qe – the power of rock art* exhibition was opened, whilst debate about the diorama continued. In his opening address the then Minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, Valli Moosa, stated the following in 2003:

> The design of this re-installation of the San art is exceptional in that it exemplifies a mode of representation that reclaims the dignity that colonialism denied to previously marginalised communities; and this not by nostalgia but through contemporary means. (In Davison 2012:28)

A question asked in this time of transformation was whose heritage is enshrined in museums (Cluver and Davison 1999:283). By the use of material recorded by the San and using the language of the San, the purported aim was to enshrine their heritage and allow previously marginalised voices to be heard (Cluver and Davison 1999:283). Davison (2011:29–30) states that this exhibition aims to give recognition to the heritage of South African rock art and to present the collections that had been in the museum

for almost a century in a way that inspires historical imagination and respect for the artists and their beliefs. The exhibition evokes San cosmology and honours the memory of the artists and the storytellers. The recurring theme in the exhibition is spiritual power. The CEO of the Iziko South African Museum acknowledges that the history of the San is one of 'dispossession, brutality and cultural loss' at the hands of the colonial settlers, and that the previous exhibitions of the San reinforced stereotypes. The 1996 White Paper for Arts and Culture emphasised the importance of redressing distorted and one-sided portrayals of history in museums and heritage sites. This had direct application for this museum that portrayed the San in a stereotyped way, not telling of their history of 'dispossession, brutality and cultural loss'. As stated by Witz (2015:2), museums became primary settings for contesting, changing and reshaping history. He argues that in post-apartheid museums, new pasts came into view through research, display and collection.

The current post-apartheid exhibition includes material from the Bleek and Lloyd manuscripts that consist of 13 000 pages of transcripts of myths and legends as narrated by San informants in the late nineteenth century. In this exhibition, rock art, photographs and line drawings of rock art and quotes taken from the Lloyd and Bleek manuscripts are exhibited in a space that intends to recreate the interior of a cave-like structure such as those in which rock art is found. This reflects Smeds' (2012:62) description of modern museums consisting of increasing multimodal elements such as writing, film, colour, lighting and images. The intention of this exhibition is to use rock art and other artefacts, and in particular the Lloyd and Bleek manuscripts, to tell the stories from the perspective of the San, an attempt at the re-representation of the San. The exhibition is comprised of a number of examples of rock paintings, engravings, artefacts (ostrich egg shell beads and necklaces, shells, skin bags) and drawings made by San children living with Bleek and Lloyd in their house. Included are photographs of modern-day San living in the Kalahari moving into a trance state and rare video footage that depicts trance events. The museum professionals responsible for constructing this exhibition have drawn heavily on the knowledge of the San whose stories are reflected in the 13 000 pages of the transcribed and translated Bleek and Lloyd archive, making them active participants in the construction of the exhibition.

This exhibition presents the richly detailed knowledge and beliefs about the San's spirit world, rain-making and healing which inspired the creation of the rock paintings and engravings. The stories represented are told from the perspective of the San. The focus is on the rich heritage of indigenous knowledge in South Africa

that has been passed down through past generations. This knowledge is expressed through story-telling, music, dance, healing practices, initiation practices, and in rock art and objects invested with symbolic value. This contrasts with the way in which the previous two exhibitions were constructed, where the voice of the San was absent. This exhibition attempts to create an 'authentic' experience of rock art by placing the exhibition in a space resembling a cave in which rock art is found. This is achieved through the creation of a three-dimensional rock wall and ceiling, covered with a massive photograph of the inside of a cave covered with rock paintings.

6.3 Current research on rock art and the spiritual life of the San

It is important to give some background to current research on rock art and the spiritual life of the San as this informed many elements in this exhibition. Current research on rock art has as its focus the spirituality of San rock art and the understanding of rock images and how these related to the San spiritual and cosmological life (Lewis-Williams 2000; Lewis-Williams and Pearce 2004; Lewis-Williams and Challis 2011; Bennun 2005; Parkington 2003). This current understanding of San rock art would not be possible were it not for the discovery of the San narratives contained in the Lloyd and Bleek archives in the 1970s, discussed previously. It is this archive that first made possible and continues to make possible an understanding of San rock art.

The interpretation of San rock art, in particular by David Lewis-Williams (1988), Lewis-Williams and Pearce (2004); Parkington (2002, 2003); Deacon (1998) and Parkington, Morris and Rusch (2008), draws on the 13 000 pages of verbatim transcripts recorded, translated and archived by Wilhelm Bleek and Lucy Lloyd in Cape Town in colonial South Africa in the 1860s. The San who told their stories to Bleek and Lloyd were /Xam prisoners who had been accused or convicted of attacks on farmers, their stock or their property, and who were sent to the Breakwater Prison in Cape Town. These prisoners were first interviewed by Bleek and Lloyd in prison, and later on the property at which Bleek and Lloyd resided. Additional information was gleaned from other informants from the Breakwater Prison who were subsequently allowed to live on the same property. These authoritative accounts are the first published version of the meaning and significance of rock art and include the folklore, beliefs and life stories of the San (Parkington, 2003:31). These recordings make it possible to gain insight into rock art and, in particular, confirm that rock art is not merely a representation of daily life but has deeper spiritual significance.

It is only in the 1970s,[1] through the words of Diä!kwain[2] in /Xam, a San language, combined with other evidence, that there was a profound change in the understanding of what the painted images meant to those who made them (Lewis-Williams and Challis 2011:52). Diä!kwain was one of the San who worked for Wilhelm Bleek and Lucy Lloyd and who told their stories. Wilhelm Bleek, a German scholar of linguistics, and Lucy Lloyd were pioneers in the study of indigenous people and Khoesan languages. Their work was the first systematic and comprehensive study of the cosmology of the San (Skotnes 2007:61). Bleek and Lloyd learnt the /Xam language and recorded 13 000 pages of interviews with San informants, including Diä!kwain. They developed a system for notating the clicks and intonations and recorded many hundreds of narratives and descriptions in phonetic /Xam and then translated these line by line into English (Skotnes 1999:31). These pages contained personal histories, word lists, myths and accounts of rituals (Lewis-Williams 2011:37). This work was used in the development of the current exhibition and is evidenced in the quotations and in the detailed understanding and communication about the rock art. Many of the quotations that illuminate this exhibition are in /Xam. The rock paintings in this exhibition illustrate various stages of trance and healing. By including these statements a more integrated approach to the exhibition is taken, as stated by Corsane (2004:7), and the ethos of the exhibition becomes one of inclusivity.

This exhibition aims to demystify and tell of the spiritual world of the San. It is claimed that the /Xam tend to conflate daily life with the spiritual; seeing life as a seamless, mythic unity that played out in more than one realm of human experience (Lewis-Williams 2000:40). Perhaps religion and spiritual matters were less separated from daily life for the San; the secular less separated from the spiritual (Lewis-Williams and Pearce 2004:71). Lewis-Williams (2000:8) notes that this blending of the spirit world with daily events appears to be particularly clear in the /Xam and other southern groups' concept of god. Thus, San rock art may take us directly to the heart of the San's religious experience, belief and ritual (Lewis-Williams and Challis 2011:51). In southern San painting communities, it is claimed that the spirit world lay behind the walls of rock shelters, which were an opening into the spirit world, the rock walls a veil suspended between two cosmological realms. Lewis-Williams and Pearce (2004:97) have argued that it was the role of the painter to see and pass through the veil to see what was happening in the spirit world and to then fix images of

1 The Bleek and Lloyd manuscripts were discovered and made public in the 1970s.
2 Diä!kwain was an informant who told Bleek and Lloyd the myths and stories of the /Xam.

spirituality on the rock surfaces. Rock painting for the San was intimately associated with and set in cosmological, ritual, religious and social spheres. The making of rock paintings was not an isolated casual activity but was closely linked to the trance dance and San cosmology (Lewis-Williams and Pearce 2004:100).

The exhibition aims to embed indigenous knowledge about the natural world in the religious and cultural practices of the San. First, it summarises the distribution, dating and methods of rock art. The oldest is the engraved ochre from Blombos which is dated at around 80 000 years ago and the most recent examples date from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Second, the exhibition aims to explain how rock art can be interpreted. The exhibition emphasises that it is essentially religious art, done to record and inspire religious and ritual practices and experiences. The point made is that it is impossible to interpret the rock art without knowledge of the beliefs behind it. In South Africa, documented information about San beliefs provide insight into the understanding of rock art that dates back to 5 000 years ago. The exhibition identifies nineteenth- and twentieth-century /Xam and Ju/'hoan people who have explained metaphors and beliefs that illuminate images and themes in rock art. The significance of particular animals and their habits, the role of rock art in rain-making, the practice of healers or shamans, and beliefs about supernatural power and experiences can be identified from rock art with the help of these testimonies. Original /Xam texts have been used in the exhibition and videos of the Ju/'hoan healing rituals show the context such as music, dance and posture in modern day ceremonies.

The next section takes the reader into the exhibition following the 'reading path' that a visitor would likely take through the exhibition.

6.4 Description of the exhibition

This exhibition consists of three areas, one flowing into the other. I refer to these areas as display areas 1, 2 and 3. Two of the spaces are smaller than the main exhibition space. These two areas flow into and out of the main exhibition area (figure 6.1). The exhibition figures prominently as the visitor approaches it via the front entrance of the museum. Visitors turn left into the first part of the exhibition (display area 1). Immediately on the left on the wall panel there is a welcome message from Jatti Bredenkamp who was the CEO of the Iziko South African Museum at the time this exhibition was opened. It is likely that this is the first part of the exhibition the visitor will see. By looking at this welcome panel first, visitors are situated in the post-apartheid socio-political context, after which they are introduced to rock art and the

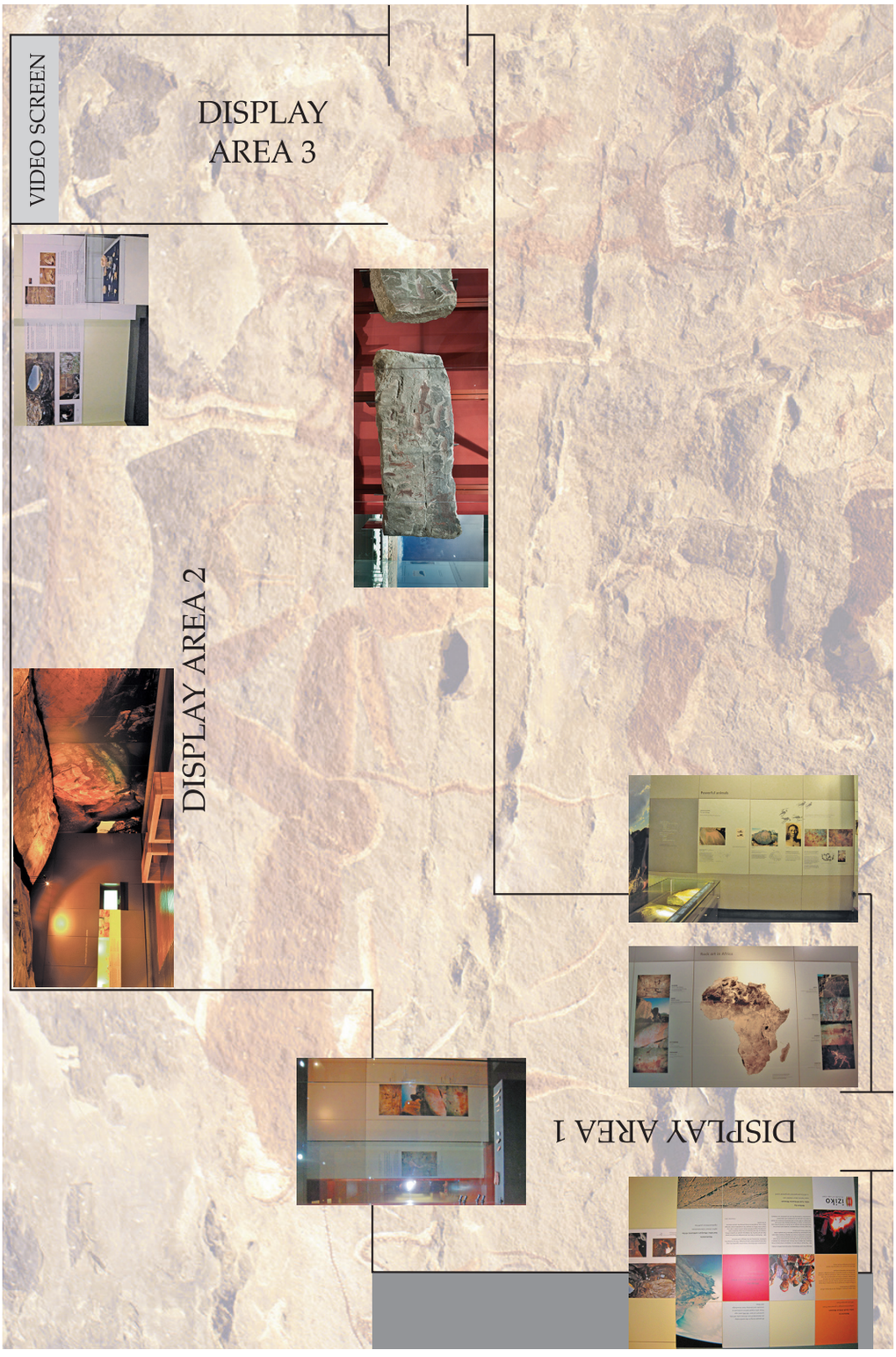

FIGURE 6.1 Floorplan of the exhibition area – only those aspects of the display which are referred to in the text are included on the floorplan. The greyed-out area abutting display area 1 indicates the position of the boarded-up diorama.

spirituality of rock art that is associated with cultural practices, such as the trance dance.

Next to the welcome panel, there is a video screen which plays footage of various descendants of the San speaking and front-of-house attendants welcoming visitors to this exhibition. On the same wall there is a panel which gives information about the South African coat of arms. This display panel contains a photograph of the coat of arms and descriptive text. It can be seen on the floorplan (figure 6.1) that this wall protrudes into the display area. This is because the diorama is positioned behind this wall. In 2001, this spectral exhibition was closed off to the public with hardboard on which these wall panels and the video is mounted. There is no signage telling the visitor about the spectral presence of the diorama, it just exists as a kind of subconscious, or buried past on top of which the present attempts to reinvent and re-present itself.

On the opposite side, contrasting with the socio-political context on the left, is a wall panel that shows a large map of Africa. On this map it is indicated where rock art sites can be found in Africa. The text provides information about these sites, provides images of the rock art and provides information about the age of the rock art. Straight ahead there is a display about the age of rock art in South Africa housed in a glass display case. Next to this display an image of a rock engraving can be seen from up close. This image creates a link with the next section of the display – display area 2 – which is on rock engravings and rock art. When looking ahead, there is a large section of the wall covered with a life-size image of the inside of a rock shelter, covered in rock paintings. When visitors look up they are faced with a three-dimensional construction of the roof of this shelter, also covered in rock paintings, as well as a large image of the wall of this rock shelter.

Next to this display are wall panels with images of rock engravings and a photograph of a rock engraving. The one wall panel deals explicitly with rain-making and rock art. In a departure from typical museum exhibits, explanations are given by the San informants who tell of their myths and legends, which in turn informs the understanding of the meaning of rock art. The panel is made up of an explanation in /Xam by /Han#kass'o, a photograph of /Han#kass'o and a statement by him about how he came to be an informant whilst serving a sentence for stock theft, quotes about rain and rain-making in /Xam, images of rock engravings associated with rain-making and line drawings of these rock engravings, as well as descriptive text. There is also a photograph of another informant, Diä!kwain, incarcerated for shooting a white farmer who had threatened to kill him and his family, a painting of a rain

animal made by him and descriptive text about the rain animal. A backdrop to a site that contains rock engravings can be seen. The photograph that forms this backdrop makes the rocks with the engravings salient and makes it possible to see the rock engravings clearly.

In area 2 is a display that tells of the materials that are used in rock painting. The display contains pigments, the Coldstream stone and a mother of pearl shell. The Coldstream stone is a burial stone found on a grave in the Coldstream area. The display also contains a rock on which various substances used in rock art are painted. It shows which substances deteriorated and disappeared in time, which indicates why some parts of rock art panels are not complete. Next to this display there is a video monitor, which is currently inactive.

There are rock art panels, line drawings and descriptive text. This part of the exhibition focuses on rock art, which, as stated, is at the centre of the San's spiritual life. This is borne out by the words of //Kabbo in the descriptive text that accompanies the image of him. In a glass display case there is a display which is headed 'The world's oldest chemistry set'. This display includes the phrase 'A powerful substance'. It also contains a 100 000-year-old mother of pearl shell that contains remnants of ochre powder, which is referred to as an ochre processing kit. This is referred to as 'the oldest chemistry set in the world' and was found at the excavation at Blombos Cave. The display also contains a broken canine leg fragment with ochre staining, a quartzite cobble used to grind ochre, red ochre with rubbing marks and a possible ochre processing tool. The descriptive text of this display is mounted on the wall behind this display case and next to the rock shelter display.

A small display on material culture artefacts used by the San contains information about material culture artefacts: a digging stick, digging stone, bags, ostrich egg shell beads, arrows, a quiver and a fly whisk. On the opposite wall are several rock art panels, including the Linton Panel, which is a panel of rock art found on the farm Linton, significant for its rich and detailed rock art which includes a depiction of a shaman in a trance state. This panel is accompanied by close-up photographs, line drawings and descriptive text.

This serves as an introduction to the final part of this exhibition which is the video recording of a group of San women and men (separate videos) doing a trance dance and going into trance. Next to this display there is an entrance to a small darkened part of the exhibition in which a video of a trance dance plays continually. The sound of this video suffuses the entire exhibition. Visitors exit this last part of the exhibition through the exit area and enter the African Studies exhibition area (see

figure 6.1). Upon entering the exhibition area the visitor hears sound that resembles chanting. When following the reading path into the main section of the exhibition, the sound becomes louder and serves to intrigue the visitor. It is unclear what this sound represents until the third and final area of the exhibition is entered. Only then it becomes clear that the sound emanates from the video of the San doing trance dances. The sound of the chanting creates coherence across the three areas of the exhibition. As the exhibition is entered and the reading path followed, the visitor will see immediately on the left the welcome panel and on the right the map of Africa, which are described below. Next the second and the main area of the exhibition is entered, which is focused on rock art and the practices and rituals associated with rock art. Finally, the third and final area of the exhibition is entered, which is a small dark room in which two videos of trance dance is shown.

Next, I select parts of the exhibition for closer analysis. I have selected sections that illustrate most clearly how key discourses are realised, with an emphasis on the relationship between the discourses.

6.5 Features of a discourse of transformation

All multimodal texts, artefacts and communicative events are always discursively shaped and all modes, in different ways, offer means for the expression of discourses. To reiterate, discourse can be defined as 'systematically-organized sets of statements which give expression to the meanings and values of an institution. Beyond that, they define, describe and delimit what it is possible to say and not say', (Kress 1985). Discourses in this exhibition are expressed through the different aspects of the displays. Discourses appear not only in the mode of language, but in many modes such as painting, sculpture, photography, design and music (Jaworski and Coupland 1999). What I have termed the discourse of spirituality is, for instance, realised in part through the use of colour.

Transformation is described in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the *Collins English Dictionary* and *Merriam-Webster* as: 'a marked change in form, nature or appearance, a process by which one figure, expression or function is converted into another', 'a change or alteration, a radical one' and 'to change in composition or structure'. A discourse of transformation is one in which change is a key feature. This discourse relates to change, in the instance of this research, in the political arena and museum display. The political change that is of relevance to this research is the change from an apartheid government to a democratic system in which race and segregation no longer are key features. As discussed earlier, many South African museums originated

during colonialism, contain colonial collections and displayed material underpinned by a colonial ethos. With the political changes taking place, these museums had to consider the way in which, in particular, people, colonial artefacts and collections were displayed. Changes had to be made to what was displayed and how it was displayed. With regard to the display and representation of the San, a discourse of transformation led to the casts that represented the San with their focus on physical characteristics no longer being displayed. The discourse of transformation influenced the display and the representation of the San in such a way that the focus instead was on their rock art and the rich spiritual life of the San, which is intimately linked with their rock art.

6.6 Display area 1: welcome panel, map of Africa, Blombos display and the oldest chemistry set

This first area contextualises the display. It does important ideational work, shaping the way visitors may make sense of the exhibition. It realises the ideational meaning through the selection of visuals and artefacts, through which the discourses are expressed. The discourse of transformation is expressed predominantly through spiritual and scientific discourses. Both scientific and spiritual discourses feed into the transformation agenda that informs this exhibition. The spiritual and scientific discourses are made up of various components. In general, the scientific discourse provides and does not negotiate information. The spiritual discourse is most strongly manifest in the display in the rock art and rain-making displays, the power of trance and the rock art panels. When one discourse is foregrounded the other discourse is backgrounded. However, there is always an interplay of discourses. In this display area I will look at and analyse the welcome panel, a map of Africa that indicates where rock art is found and what has been called the world's oldest chemistry set.

6.7 Welcome panel: a discourse of transformation

The welcome panel (figure 6.2) consists of images and written text, juxtaposed to create a kaleidoscopic or patchwork effect. Notions of kaleidoscope and patchwork echo the idea of a 'rainbow nation', an aspect of the transformation discourse. The term 'rainbow nation' was coined by Archbishop Desmond Tutu to refer to the multiracial nature of post-apartheid South African society. This idea of unity in diversity is reflected in the motto on the coat of arms, which is placed next to the welcome panel,!ke e:/xarra //ke, which means 'diverse people'. The multiracial and multilingual representation in the display is a crucial aspect of a discourse of

FIGURE 6.2 Welcome panel

transformation. As argued previously, in South Africa, the major social markers of difference include race and language, which have played a major role as determinants of social identity. Language played a central role in the conceptualisation of Black 'nations' under apartheid. South Africans were identified, categorised and segregated in terms of 'language groups' (Alexander 2001:141). This fed into the apartheid state, underpinned by Afrikaner nationalism, and connected with racial oppression and separatism. In the idea of a 'rainbow nation', colour is an important signifier. The colours represented on this welcome panel range from a pale sandy colour to a deep red, including ochre type. The colours used throughout the exhibition are in this range. This serves to create a sense of coherence and echoes the same range of ochre colours used in rock art. From a distance, the eye is drawn to the central red square and the warm tones of the four squares on the left hand side of the composite image. Looking at the written text in the welcome panel, the Given-New arrangement (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2006) is given meaning in the way the first (top left) square reads 'Welcome' while the bottom right square gives the isiXhosa translation of welcome – 'Wamkelekile'. The second square from the left in the bottom row contains the Afrikaans word 'Welkom'. The San word for welcome is also

used – '!|Khodja siya'. By using three of the official languages of the country on this panel, credence is given to multilingualism. This could suggest moving from the old to a more inclusive 'new' that values multilingualism in which all official languages spoken in the area are recognised. This can be seen, for example, in the welcome panel which contains information in three of the eleven official languages of the country. Any discourse retains vestiges of fragments of other discourses that remain in dialogue with each other. Although the ethos of transformation is evidenced in this welcome panel through, for example, the use of multilingualism, there remain traces of representational practices that 'other' the San. These traces are most visible in the video of trance dancing in display area 3. Gee (1994:144) notes that discourses can be in relation to one another and that discourses can be in points of opposition to a variety of other viewpoints.

The visuals include a photograph of the San doing a trance dance around a fire (C1), a group of women singing and clapping (B2), a part of a map of Africa (A and B4) and a part of a rock engraving (D3 and 4). The image of the trance dance and that of the women singing and clapping refer to the section of the exhibition on trance dancing. The photograph of the San dancing around a fire is taken from an oblique point of view. A photograph taken from this angle does not necessarily involve the represented participants as it could indicate: 'What you see here is not part of our world, something you are not involved in' (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2006:136). The effect of this is that the San become somewhat 'observed'. The lack of illumination makes it impossible to discern the figures clearly as well as any details such as the facial features of the dancing figures. The effect created by the fire is that the dancing figures appear ghostlike and other-worldly. The image shows a black background, a fire in the foreground and ghostlike figures behind the fire. In this instance, the lack of contextualisation leads to the activity appearing strange and mysterious. The fire is foregrounded and the human figures backgrounded, adding to the portrayal of a mysterious ritual taking place.

The second image (B2), in contrast, of women clapping and singing is composed in a way to make the represented participants appear familiar to the viewer. It is taken from what Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) call a 'public' distance. The choice of distance suggests different relations between represented participants and the viewer (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2006:124). The woman on the right in the front looks directly at the camera. The effect of this 'demand' gaze is that the viewer is drawn into the activity taking place in the image through the gaze of the represented participant. The dress and the beaded adornment of the women serves to provide

some contextualisation. However, the lack of background and other contextualisation make the represented participants appear more generic. The effect of this lack of setting is that the image becomes a representation of a group of women, engaging in an activity that is a general human one which everyone can relate to. This works against emphasising difference and 'strangeness'. The image of the women clapping and singing and that of the figures dancing against the backdrop of the fire work together and are related through the appearance of the deep red colour of the fire and the red of the woman's headdress.

The written text in the welcome panel speaks of a transformation in the display of the San and states that no longer will the museum be known for the display of plaster casts that emphasised the physical features of the San, but for the significant rock art that is housed in it.

> For almost a century the South African Museum housed some of the most significant examples of rock art produced by San artists, however it was better known for the displays of plaster body casts that emphasised the physical features of the San people rather than their history and culture.

A closer look at the written text on the welcome panel is also revealing. The written text (C2) states that the word 'Iziko' (the name given to a group of museums of which the South African Museum is part) means 'hearth' in the isiXhosa language and that, in Xhosa tradition, the hearth is the social centre of the home that is associated with 'warmth, kinship, and the ancestral spirits'. By choosing an isiXhosa word to name the group of museums, the museum signifies a process of transformation which no longer places English and Western tradition at the forefront. Similarly, the statement that 'All living people in the world today are descended from Africans who left this continent at least 100 000 years ago' acknowledges the centrality of Africa as the origin of humankind. This acknowledgement is also evident in the rock art done by the San, 'the remarkable artistic heritage that is now recognised as being among the cultural treasures of the world'.

This direct engagement with issues of representation in the welcome panel and the highlighting of the importance of selection in curatorship is an important part of discourses of transformation, where representation is seen as ideological and open for debate and critique. Rankin (2013:76, 80) states that it was not an easy task for museums to make an ideological change in focus when their collections were initiated under colonial rule and shaped under apartheid.

The welcome panel states that 'For almost a century the South African Museum housed the most significant examples of San rock art produced by San artists'. However, whilst the museum housed this important rock art, the San casts were displayed separately from the rock art, drawing no link between them. The curatorial choice of what goes together belies the underlying ideologies of the time. In this exhibition, on the contrary, the rock art is represented as integral to the cultural and spiritual lives of the San. The current exhibition acknowledges the spiritual power of rock art and the oral literature of the /Xam informants who worked with Wilhelm Bleek and Lucy Lloyd. The written text on the welcome panel states that for the first time in the display of the San in this museum the 'remarkable heritage' of the San is recognised as being 'among the cultural treasures of the world'.

A final important point made in the written text on the panel is 'All people living in the world are descended from Africans who left this continent at least 100 000 years ago'. This is a different approach to the evolutionary view of the San being of a different 'racial type'. Included with the words 'Welcome to the South African Museum' is the phrase 'Where knowledge is presented from an African perspective'. This draws on the significance of the statement that all people are descended from Africa and adds gravity to the notion that the knowledge contained in the South African Museum is presented from an African perspective. The San are South Africa's first people, from whom a large part of the South African population is descended.

This section has shown how the discourse of transformation is realised in the welcome panel through the acknowledgement of Africa as the origin of humankind; in the use of multilingualism, through the concept of a 'rainbow' nation; and in the way San culture and spirituality is given acknowledgement. Whereas the San have often been represented as an ancient people with ancient practices, this exhibition debunks this reified notion of the 'ancient' by bringing the San into current times.

6.8 Putting rock art on the map: scientific discourse

The map of Africa, opposite the welcome panel, indicates where in Africa rock art is found. The photograph of the rock engraving refers to part of the exhibition that focuses on rock engravings. The effect of the choice and use of these visuals is that they frame the rest of the exhibition. The visuals indicate what is salient in the exhibition and foreground the notion that rock art is found in Africa, the cradle of mankind. The display provides information about who is responsible for making rock art and engravings. The map communicates that rock paintings usually represent spiritual ideas, objects and experiences that were powerful aspects of social and religious

beliefs. It also notes that paintings and engravings done by farming communities are generally schematic and include symbols used in ritual practices.

The map shows different countries in Africa in which rock art occurs. Next to the map on either side are images of rock art from these areas and with this is a description of the painting and the information about the age of the rock art. The map is placed at the centre of the display whilst the examples of rock art found in different parts of Africa are placed on the margins. The map in the centre is the nucleus of the information to which the other elements – the pictures of rock art – are secondary. This display is strongly framed by being placed on a board, thus forming a separate unit of information from the rest of the exhibition. Scientific discourse here manifests in the offering of information with minimal use of words. Full sentences are not used, for example 'Engraving of large human figure over giraffe and cattle; Date estimated at 2000 to 3000 years' and 'Painting of giraffe and animals; Date unknown'. The information here is provided and not negotiated (Halliday and Martin 1993), making the scientific text authoritative.

Maps are found mostly in contexts that offer a kind of knowledge which has been highly valued in Western culture. They are considered to be objective dispassionate knowledge free of emotive involvement and subjectivity (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2006:121). The information here is presented objectively as in 'Date estimated at 2000 to 3000 years'. Additionally, the map is located in the museum, a Western construct, in which the knowledge that is communicated is highly valued and considered to be

FIGURE 6.3 Map of Africa indicating where rock art is found

factual. Given this, the information provided in the map is considered unequivocal and reliable.

The map functions as a point of departure – it is something viewers already know as an agreed-upon point for a message. The eye is taken to the images of rock art that indicate not only that rock art is found in Africa, but also where it is found – both in rock shelters and in specific places in different countries. On the map, there is maximum abstraction of representation. What is selected for representation are the mountains and flat areas of Africa which show where rock art can be found. It is thus unnecessary for the map to portray detail such as rivers, cities and towns. The map of Africa and the images lead to the next part of the exhibition in which panels depicting rock art, found in specific areas in South Africa, are displayed. The moving from the general to the specific is part of the findings. The findings indicate that the centre of the display panel consists of the map of Africa which is the general. Radiating out from the map, the specific, are images of rock art found in specific areas of Africa. This demonstrates how some kinds of scientific thought, in this instance geographical data, moves from the general to the specific.

6.9 Blombos cave display: scientific discourse

This display contains engraved ochre found at Blombos Cave. It includes the oldest piece of ochre that has been engraved by the San, which is considered to be amongst some of the earliest known examples of Stone Age art, dating back to between 75 000 and 80 000 BCE. It is the only example of sub-Saharan art. This find is iron ore stone ochre that is decorated with cross-hatch designs. It predates the oldest example of rock paintings in the world by 30 000 years. 'The significance of this find is suggestive of an advanced people capable of generating and understanding symbols and abstraction' (www.visual-arts-cork.com/prehistoric/blombos-cave-art.htm). Acknowledging the San as an advanced people is completely contrary to the way in which they were represented in the first exhibition in which they were referred to as of a 'primitive species' believed to be going 'extinct', some one hundred years earlier – in this exhibition they are placed in modernity. This is evidence of a discourse of transformation.

The discourse of transformation that is manifest in the selection of the decorated ochre for inclusion in this exhibition is in marked contrast with the scientific views underlying the evolutionary discourse evident in the first exhibition. In the first exhibition visitors were positioned to focus on the physical features of the San that stressed their 'difference'. There was no notion of a common humanity. The written

FIGURE 6.4 Blombos cave display

text in this new exhibition, in contrast, states that: 'Their uniquely modern traits were developed during the Stone Age in Africa, birthplace of all people'. This speaks to a common humanity, which is transformative. The modernity that is referred to relates to the scientific, and to the scientific discourse.

Jewitt (2014:27) states that all multimodal texts, artefacts and communicative events offer the means for the expression of discourses. With the discourse of transformation there is a scientific discourse evidenced in the descriptive text that accompanies this display. Factual information is presented (for example, the location in the cave in which this piece of ochre was found), the age of the engraving as well as information about 'modern behaviour'. Further scientific information provided is evidenced in 'Scientists used Luminescence Dating to establish the age of the objects in Blombos Cave'. Information that is provided also includes 'Making tools from bone was a major step forward in human technology', 'Polish on some of the tools suggest that they were probably used to pierce soft materials such as animal skins, perhaps to make clothes and bags' and 'Examination of the abalone shell under a microscope shows traces of red ochre powder from body paint and polishing around the holes caused by rubbing against a leather or vegetable fibre chord'. This nominalisation is common to scientific writing and contributes to the scientific discourse evidenced in this part of the exhibition, alongside the discourse of transformation.

The next section discusses a fairly recent archaeological find of an abalone shell that contain traces of an ochre substance that was dated to 100 000 years ago. The rock art sites referred to on the map of Africa are dated to around 2 000 or 3 000 years. In the next section I show how scientific discourse is dominant and how it has the effect of drawing the San into modernity by representing the San as scientists involved in complex scientific processes.

6.10 The 'oldest chemistry set': scientific discourse

This part of the exhibition is headed by the words 'A powerful substance', which refers to the ochre found in the abalone shell which has been dated to 100 000 years ago. The display consists of images on a display board of the cave in which this abalone shell was found, an image of the excavation, an image of a piece of ochre and the abalone shell on a display board, which is accompanied by written text. There is also a small display case in front of the display board that contains the abalone shell with ochre, a bone fragment with ochre staining from a canine, a piece of quartzite, a piece of red ochre, a seal shoulder bone stained with ochre and a possible ochre processing tool. The phrase 'A powerful substance' refers to the pigment-rich compound found inside the abalone shell. The word 'power' could also refer to the idea that the ochre compound was used in symbolic ways, for example, the power of the San to make rain. It is empowering for the San.

The display board has the heading 'The world's oldest chemistry set' with a subheading 'A 100 000 year-old ochre processing kit from Blombos Cave, South Africa'. The 'oldest chemistry set' refers to the age of the abalone shell and the compound in the shell as well as to the notion that by mixing this compound the San were using scientific methods.

In this exhibition, the ancient practices of the San are given agency through the use of scientific discourse and the scientific manner in which their practices are framed. By giving legitimacy to the cultural practices of the San and by framing them in a

FIGURE 6.5 Display of the 'oldest chemistry set'

scientific discourse, the San are no longer represented as the 'objects 'of a scientific discourse but the subjects. This draws the San into discourses of modernity. The type of visual chosen for this display reflects scientific discourse. A drawing of what was found alongside the abalone shell is scientific in its style of presentation. The artefacts that were found with the abalone shell are all labelled in the way seen in scientific textbooks, using scientific terminology such as 'canid ulna', 'cortical quartzite flake' and 'broken bovid vertebra'. The scientific name for an abalone shell, *Haliotis midae*, is used, as is the word 'haematite' for iron. The image of the archaeological dig shows the manner in which these layers have been numbered and indicates the age of the various layers of the soil, showing the scientific measurement of time, 'Ages – years ago' i.e. one hundred thousand years ago, which is stated in scientific terminology. The label states 'Archaeological layers at Blombos Cave (South section)', which is a scientific way of identifying an archaeological dig site. The scientific manner in which this part of the exhibition is presented provides a legitimacy to San culture as the scientific discourse is deemed to represent what is definitive.

The written text starts with 'At least two Middle Stone Age chemists produced a liquefied pigment rich mixture'. The 'Middle Stone Age' dates the time at which this liquefied pigment was produced to between 28 000 and 25 000 years ago. The word 'produced' has been chosen instead of 'made'. This elevates the activity of mixing a scientific compound into the realm of science. The Middle Stone Age San are referred to as 'chemists', which gives credence to the scientific knowledge and action of the San who liquefied a pigment-rich mixture and stored it in an abalone shell. It puts the knowledge of the San firmly into the scientific realm. This statement is followed by 'Once the people left the cave, dune sand blew in and covered the toolkits, protecting them until they were discovered through scientific excavation 100 000 years later'. The abalone shell in which a liquefied mixture was found is referred to as a toolkit. The written text states that the *Haliotis midae* was found in situ. Although this archaeological display is associated with San ritual and spiritual activity, the emphasis is on the scientific nature of the toolkit, the activity of the San and the archaeological processes from finding the artefact through scientific study to display. The written text states that this is the 'oldest known evidence of people practising chemistry by mixing ochre, fat, bone and organic compounds to make a pigment rich mixture'. It is important to note how the scientific discourse continues to be foregrounded. Rather than stating that a pigment-rich mixture was made using ochre, fat, bone and organic compounds, the terminology chosen for this action is 'practising chemistry'. This gives the San agency. Due scientific process

has been followed in the labelling and labels are attached to the artefacts on display as is scientific practice. This makes it possible for viewers to appreciate the scientific authenticity of the find, the excavation and the display of the artefacts from a visual perspective. Further, this gives scientific gravitas to the importance of the action of the San and to the artefacts. The labels attached to the artefacts contain scientific formulae –'cnkow', 'co (n)' and 'CPA(m)', again foregrounding the scientific nature of this display. The visual images of the artefacts as they were found contributes to the understanding of the scientific process of excavating artefacts and of scientific practice through, for example, showing how the labels are attached to the artefacts and how they are inscribed. In this way scientific evidence is provided.

The written description that lists the artefacts in bullet points uses scientific discourse, for example, in the phrase 'using heat to facilitate fat extraction from the seal scapula'. Not only is a scientific term used, 'scapula', but there is also a nominalisation, typical of scientific writing, in the sentence – 'facilitate fat extraction'. The verb 'extract', embedded in a process, is turned into the noun 'extraction' to 'stand for' the process. The process of making the liquefied substance is couched in scientific discourse by calling the process of 'using specific ingredients in a particular order to create a new substance' and 'chemistry'.

Acknowledgement is given to the scientific ability of the San to use ingredients in a particular order. Credence is also given to the ability of the San to plan for the future by mixing the compound and storing it for further use, again giving them agency and placing them in modernity. This is referred to in the written text as 'we have evolved mentally here to make us who we are today'. It is also stated that this find is the oldest instance of deliberate planning, production and storing of a pigmented compound and that is the oldest evidence for the human use of a container. The scientist suggests in the written text that this pigment-rich compound may have been used as a sunscreen or that it could have been used in symbolic ways, such as for body decoration. Whilst the essence of the presentation in this display is scientific there is acknowledgement that this compound could have been used in symbolic ways. This ties in with the emphasis in the rest of the exhibition on the spirituality of the San as body decoration would have been used in spiritual activities. What is important is that in this display the scientific and the spiritual discourse are not juxtaposed, or set in opposition to each other, but are rather related in meaningful ways.

6.11 Display area 2: binding and bonding

Display area 2 is somewhat different in look and feel from the first display area. A central feature of this display is a large three-dimensional cave-like structure that mimics the interior of a rock shelter in nature in which rock art is often found. Because of the feeling of being inside a cave, the interpersonal metafunction is primary and analysed here. Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006:15) define the interpersonal as 'a function of enacting social interactions as social relations'. Stenglin has argued that the concepts of binding and bonding realise the interpersonal metafunction and are concerned with the experience of being in open or enclosed spaces. The concepts are particularly useful in looking at the ways in which people's emotions can be affected by the organisation of space. Stenglin argues that space can be minimally, moderately or strongly bound (2004:171–172). Broadly speaking, a strongly bounded space is a small space that is firmly enclosed, a moderately bound space is somewhat larger and more loosely enclosed and, in a minimally bound space, the space is larger and wider. I look at the second display area in terms of lighting, colour and texture and how these aspects contribute to the space being moderately bound.

In the rock art display area, there is firm flooring, walls around four sides of the room except for the two smaller entrance areas and a low ceiling in part of the display area, as well as the even lower 'ceiling' created by the roof of the cave-like structure.

FIGURE 6.6 Rock shelter construction in display area 2

This creates a relationship of security and feeling bound between the visitors and the space. The rock art display is a quiet, contemplative space permeated by the background sound created by the video in the third display area which is next to this display area. The upper and lower end of the space is defined clearly. It is an enclosed, contained, three-dimensional space. In addition, not only does the ceiling provide shelter from the elements but the rock shelter gives the impression of doing the same as it would do in nature. Because rock shelters provided shelter they were used by the San as shelters to live in, eat, do trance dances and create rock art. The space is a self-contained entity which has a clearly defined focus. It is a contemplative, warm and welcoming space in which visitors can read and contemplate the labels and the artefacts on display.

As Stenglin (2004:165) notes, the organisation of space is also influenced by other factors such as light, colour, and texture. This display is dimly lit, bathed in a warm light. When looking at the three-dimensional cave-like structure in the rock art display (depicted in figure 6.6), it can be seen that, while this space is softly lit, visitors can still see and are not enclosed in darkness. Stenglin (2004:135–136) argues that some spaces can construct the relationship between the space and the visitor in a way that makes the visitor feel too bound. Stenglin gives the example of the Te Papa Museum in which visitors enter a cave which is made to become so dark that the visitors are in the space are completely enclosed by the space and cannot see anything. The absence of light impacts on the visitors' feelings of security in this space, leading to them feeling insecure and afraid. It is not the case with this display. In spite of the low light, this area feels safe and secure. In fact, the low lighting in this display contributes to visitors feeling 'bound' and contained.

The low lighting in this exhibition highlights the use of ochre and the richness of this colour. The low lighting invokes the feeling of being on the inside of a rock art shelter. By being in a rock shelter filled with rock art the viewer is invited to enter into the spirit world of the San. It is within rock shelters that trance dances took place by firelight during which the shamans went into trance and entered and exited the spirit world through the rock faces. This lack of colour differentiation highlights the ochre and mimics firelight which contributes to the sense of spirituality and 'mystery' that this display represents. As noted, trance dances took place by firelight. Lewis-Williams and Pearce (2004:99) wonder how panels of images appeared to shamans dancing in rock shelters lit by a flickering fire. Lewis-Williams and Pearce (2004:99) postulate that the extra vividness experienced by people in trance combined with the flickering firelight probably animated the images that were on the rock walls.

The warm light in which the exhibition is bathed and the warm hues of ochre colour throughout this display gives it a sense of coherence and creates a warm and tranquil atmosphere and a sense of safety. The use of ochre-like colours as well as the lowered part of the ceiling and the sense of containment this lowered ceiling and the textured cave-like structure creates, makes this a space in which visitors can feel bound. It creates a sense of being 'cocooned'.

Texture is used as a representation resource throughout the display. The ceiling, floor and the Perspex panels have a surface as do the display boards and benches and the display case. The surface that contains the image of the wall of the rock shelter is not roughly textured. However, the photograph of the inside of the rock shelter is richly textured, to the point that the texture is almost tangible. The rock art images on both the photograph of the walls of the rock shelter and the roof of the rock shelter contributes to the depth and extent of the texture of the rock shelter. There are deep fissures in the construction of the rock shelter, which contributes to the rich texture of this construction. The texture in this structure contributes to the sense of depth of the rock shelter. The sense of being inside a rock shelter that looks and feels as if it is real contributes to the feeling of being bound in the exhibition.

In this exhibition the ceiling is not particularly high, and is made lower in the corner area where the cave-like structure has been created. Stenglin (2004:224) argues that the choices of how bound or unbound a space is in large part determined by the permeability of the material used for the roof covering, and whether it can be penetrated by heat, air and light. The rock art exhibition has a roof covering that is not permeable and does not let in air, heat or light. It is constructed of opaque material and visually seals the sky off, as would happen in a rock shelter in nature. There is thus what Stenglin (2004:224) refers to as a closed relationship between the interior and the exterior. The rock art exhibition is surrounded by four walls, which makes the exhibition space envelop the visitor. Writing about wall planes and interpersonal meaning Stenglin (2004:282) argues that wall planes are instrumental in constructing the firmness of enclosure that is experienced by people in a space. Wall planes construct feelings of enclosure and privacy, suggesting that walls are instrumental in the construction of the interpersonal relationship between the person and the space. They establish vertical boundaries around the person and the space they are in, which tends to make them feel secure as it creates a physical space that envelops them. The encircling of people by the space plays an important role in making them feel comfortable, protected and secure. This contrasts with the scientific discourse, but complements it, showing the San as competent, rounded and fully human.

FIGURE 6.7 Display text on rain animals

6.12 Power in the spiritual discourse

The notion of power, which is key in San spirituality, is foregrounded throughout this exhibition in the way in which it is represented. The interpersonal function is realised through the use of written information and the notion of power is represented in quotes that include 'powerful things', 'the power of ritual rock art', 'powerful animals', 'power of trance', 'power of belief' and 'power to heal'. The spiritual is manifest, for example, in 'powerful things', 'power of belief' and 'power of trance'. The notion of power for the San is suffused with spirituality.

The introductory panel text that leads into this display area is headed */Qe – the power of rock art*. The subheading is 'Ancestors, rain-making and healing'. The first statement is 'Spiritual beliefs give rock paintings and engravings their power'. This written text states that the display 'shows how the ideas, knowledge and beliefs of the descendants of the earliest inhabitants of southern Africa were expressed in rock paintings and engravings'. It continues with 'Through painted and engraved images the artists expressed the power of animals such as the eland, the experience of trance as well as spiritual beliefs related to healing and rain-making'. The focus of this display is on spiritual beliefs and the importance of power in the San belief system, through which the discourse of spirituality is expressed.

Lewis-Williams and Dowson (1989:33) note that potency in the /Xam language

means the same as the English word 'powerful'. Lewis-Williams and Pearce (2004:206) use the word 'potency' to mean supernatural power. The San shamans were considered to be full of potency as were many other things, such as large game. Shamans have the power to heal and to make rain. Objects depicted in rock art have power. Sometimes after an eland (a large antelope), which was considered to be imbued with power, was killed the San took some of the animal's blood, mixed it into their paint and made rock paintings. The painting itself then became a reservoir of power to which dancing shamans could turn to get more power (Lewis-Williams and Challis 2011:57). The paintings were filled with power that played a role in subsequent rituals. Throughout the display the quotes by San figures in the /Xam (San) language foregrounds aspects of the spirituality of the San that relate to power. This is evidenced in the statement in which Diä!kwain states that the magic power of a medicine man remains when he dies. Rock art is at the heart of San religious experience, belief and ritual (Lewis-Williams and Challis 2011:51). With rock art being foregrounded, salience is assigned to not only rock art, but to what rock art represents, the spiritual experience of the San. The repeated use of the word 'power' and the explanation that spirituality is associated with power emphasises not only the importance of power in San life but, by association, the spiritual aspects of San life. The effect of this leads to an understanding of the all-importance of San spirituality and the foregrounding of a discourse of spirituality.

6.13 Rock art and rain-making: spiritual discourse

Spiritual discourse can be defined as having as its focus spiritual and cultural aspects related to the life of the San. The spiritual discourse is evidenced in the information provided about rain animals. A part of this exhibition that focuses on rock art and rain-making, is headed 'Power from the ancestors – rock art and rain-making'. It contains several quotations from members of the San community as well as from the informant /Han#kass'o,[3] both in the /Xam language and in translation into English. Rain, like certain animals, was also considered to have power (Lewis-Williams 1981:6). The San believed that certain animals attracted rain. An image of a rock engraving of an animal with elephant legs and the bodies of elephant shrews and a line drawing of this engraving are included in this display. It is believed that these two animals live in well-watered areas that are an inspiration for rain-making. Another engraving

3 An San informant who provided information about the life of the San to Lucy Lloyd and Wilhelm Bleek.

included in this display is of dancing and flying figures with elephants. The elephant and her calf are surrounded by dancing figures with fly whisks carried by dancers. The bird-like heads of the flying figures emphasise the supernatural experiences that rain-makers have when they enter the spirit world assisted by powerful animals. This information is given in the written text. However, even though information is being provided, the suffusion of spirituality inherent in the figures and the symbolism of these figures as well as their meaning, such as the notion that the bird-like heads of the figures emphasise the supernatural experiences of rain makers when they enter trance, is dominant. This discourse of spirituality is also evident in the selection of a piece of text which is an explanation by /Han#kass'o of the calling of rain, again in /Xam and then translated into English by Lloyd and Bleek. This is intended to be read as poetic. The address, 'o friend', which is repeated, speaks directly to the visitor, creating empathy with the writer:

> Call out to the rain, keep calling
> standing in the rain:
> O friend,
> O friend,
> O friend,
> hold still, rain gently for me

Spirituality is inherent in rain-making, as well as in rain animals and birds associated with rain-making. Some of the information that is known about the spirituality in rain-making is provided by informants. Not only does this information make clear the prominence of spirituality in rain-making, but it makes clear the dominance of the spiritual discourse manifest in this exhibition. The provision of information by the San gives gravitas and salience to the notion of spirituality. It also gives credence to the knowledge of the San. This gives voice to an historically marginalised group, thus contributing to the discourse of transformation.

6.14 Rock art panels: spiritual discourse

Two of the rock art panels on display were removed from the farm Linton in the early twentieth century and brought to the South African Museum. They are known as the Linton panels, ironically taking the name of the farm which would have been owned by settler colonials. It is estimated that the paintings were done between 1 000 and 2 000 years ago. Both panels illustrate the power of animals and encounters in

FIGURE 6.8 Panels of rock art

the spirit world. The written text that accompanies these two panels explains that rock paintings record spiritual knowledge and experiences of medicine men and women who had learnt to use the supernatural power of trance for the benefit of others. It also states that symbols in rock art can be understood by referring to San beliefs. There is an emphasis on the spiritual aspects of rock art and the information provided about rock art has as its focus spirituality. Van Leeuwen (2005:94) states that discourse is key to understanding how semiotic resources are used to construe representations of what is going on in the world. The rock art panels construct the representation of the spiritual world of the San.

The written text states that rock art illustrates sensations that cannot be seen. Experienced shamans learn to control hallucinations that they 'see' during trance. It is believed that when they enter the spirit world they may change or partly transform into an animal. This is demonstrated in a detail on the rock art panel of a jackal or wild dog with spots like those of the man next to it. The written text also states that a sensation felt in trance is the feeling that the body becomes either very large or small and has extra limbs. The detail of this rock painting shows a man with an extra arm painted in white, a jackal with two extra legs painted in white and a two-headed antelope. Acknowledgement is given to the voice of the San which can be heard in the quote in the written text in /Xam and translated into English that states 'The medicine man turns himself into a jackal'. Further information that is provided has a focus on the spiritual by stating that composite rock paintings,

painted over successive generations, have several layers of meaning, and have the enduring importance of ritual and symbol. The discourse that is foregrounded is the spiritual discourse. The result of this is foregrounding the importance of San spirituality and the giving of credence and a voice to the San, which reinforces the discourse of transformation.

6.15 The power of trance

The trance dance – the healing dance – is the most important San ritual. From this dance emanates rituals and myths as well as daily life. This dance is never far from daily realities (Lewis-Williams and Pearce 2004:82). The trance dance is the principal source of spiritual knowledge (Lewis-Williams and Pearce 2004:xxiv).

> The dance provides the focal point for what anthropologists consider to be the central features of a culture. The dance is the Kung's[4] primary expression of "religion", "medicine" and "cosmology". It is their primary ritual. For the Kung the dance is, quite simply, an orienting and integrating even of unique importance. (Katz cited in Lewis-Williams and Pearce 2004:82)

The exhibition includes a section on trance dancing in which there is written text, a rock art image and a line drawing of this rock art image that shows San doing a trance dance. Given the importance of the trance dance for San well-being, religion and cosmology, it follows that San rock art was principally concerned with this dance and its diverse cosmological implications and experiences. This is given credence in the display by the heading 'The power of ritual in rock art' and in the accompanying image and written text.

It is the San shamans who go into trance when doing the trance dance and who enter the world of the spirits, which is multifaceted, mercurial and mysterious. The San attach the importance they do to the trance dance because it unites their communities, dissipates social tensions and heals all people in more than one way (Lewis-Williams and Pearce 2004:91–92). Like the trance dance itself, rock painting was a ritual activity that made contact with the spiritual world. In southern San painting communities the spirit world lay behind the walls of the rock shelters, such as the construction of the rock shelter that can be seen in this display. The rock shelters became enveloping dioramas filled with powerful and vivified visions of the cosmos

4 A San group

(Lewis-Williams and Pearce 2004:97, 99). The images of rock art depicted powerful entities such as eland filled with potency, creatures of the spirit realm, animals and spirits issuing from behind the walls of rock shelters and all the transformations of spiritual experience.

The section in the display on trance is headed 'Power of trance'. It includes written text, a rock painting showing trance dancing, a line drawing of this trance dance and a photograph of a man going into trance with written text describing going into trance in both /Xam and English. The written text on trance dancing provides information about what it is like to go into trance, told in part through the words of Diä!kwain who said that a shaman 'paints the man who is ill, with the "blood from his nose"'. Bleeding from the nose, which happens when going into trance, is often depicted in rock art through showing nasal bleeding or nasal blood smeared on the face, as stated in the written text in the exhibition. The provision of information by Diä!kwain is transformational and gives voice to the previously marginalised San, and is thus a move towards a discourse of transformation. The spiritual discourse in this section of the exhibition focuses on the spiritual aspects of San life and rock art whilst at the same time providing information about rock art and San spirituality.

6.16 Display area 3: trance, spirituality and difference

The third and final part of the exhibition does not contain artefacts or written text. It is small darkened room containing a few benches in which two videos of trance dancing are shown in a continuous loop. The fact that this section contains two videos of trance dancing is pointed to by the image of a man falling into trance and being held by another male in the second display area, following the reading path in the exhibition.

This room has no information that contextualises this part of the exhibition, the videos. The last section of the previous display ends with a small section on trance, which is intended to lead into this part of the exhibition. Aside from this, there is nothing that indicates that the videos are about trance dancing and trance. For visitors watching the videos it would be an experience that does not clearly indicate that they are watching videos on trance. As is discussed later, the figures dancing around the fire are otherworldly in their appearance. This otherworldly appearance and the lack of contextualisation of the videos and the experience of watching the videos contributes to the representation of the San as 'different'. This does not represent the San as part of modernity as other aspects of this exhibition does.

These two videos were made by American filmmaker Bradford Keeney and show San healing dances in the Kalahari in the 1990s. Bradford Keeney is an anthropologist

of cultural healing traditions and an ethnographic filmmaker. He spent over a decade travelling the world, living with spiritual teachers and healers, including the Kalahari San (Bushmen), with whom he became a n/omkxao – a healer. Megan Biesele of the Kalahari Research Group has the following to say about him: 'There is no question in the minds of the Bushman healers that Keeney's strength and purposes are coterminous with theirs. They affirmed his power as a healer'.

The fact that the filmmaker is a healer himself and appears to have been accepted by the San as a healer may have influenced the way in which he chose to film the trance dances, in a non-interventionist manner keeping the camera fixed in one position so as not to disrupt the proceedings and from an angle from which the whole bodies of the trance-dancing San could be seen as well as most of the activity around the fire.

These two videos are shot in documentary format. Classic documentary films have an authoritative narrator that identifies and interprets the images (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2006:19, 29). These videos are not mediated by the filmmaker nor by the curators of the exhibition. It is up to the viewer to find a way to interpret what is depicted in the videos, without any mediation.

The footage is shot with a handheld camera. Handheld camera shots often result in a shaky image and the purposeful use of this technique is called 'shaky camera'. Shaky camera technique is often used to create a documentary film feel. Shaky camera footage creates intensity. It is a technique that is used to heighten tension and create realism (https://www.videomaker.com). This is the technique that is used in the filming of the two trance videos.

Camera positions can create symbolic relations between viewers and what is depicted in an image (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2006: 261). This video is shot from a low angle, which has the effect of announcing power and of making the subject seem powerful. The camera is positioned on the ground, looking up at the dancers around the fire. This brings the figures to the fore, making them appear powerful. This footage is also shot close up so that the viewer feels engaged. This has the effect of drawing the viewer into the activity that is depicted. But looking at the video decades later, the effect can be to make the viewer feel like a voyeur.

Black and white film-making is a visual representation that does not use colour. The documentary in black and white, viewed from where we are now in time, can have a profound otherworldly effect. Black and white is a way of creating something insular and immersive in its otherworldliness (https://theartifice.com). Black and white film is also believed to be more authentic, and it is believed that scenes shot in

black and white were shot from actuality (McCoy 1962:71). Thus the trance videos appear authentic but also as if they belong to another time and place. The video maker did have the choice of using colour. It can be surmised that a black and white medium was chosen in order to highlight the spiritual aspects of the trance dances.

These videos depict the trance dance of the Ju/'hoan San of the Kalahari in Namibia and illustrate how some of these beliefs were enacted relatively recently. It includes footage of the Gwa dance, the women's healing dance, which will be described and analysed in this section. The soundtrack of the videos infuses the entire exhibition and can be heard from the moment visitors enter the first display area. The sound is that of chanting-type singing and rhythmic clapping with little change in tone. It lends an aura of mystique to especially the second display area, which is very dimly lit and resembles the inside of a rock shelter. Should one have the knowledge that trance dances can take place in rock shelters it would be possible to imagine dancing and clapping around a fire in this rock shelter, which would be a very evocative image. As visitors leave the third display area, they are followed by the sound of chanting and rhythmic clapping, taking the essence of the spiritual experience of this exhibition with them as they enter the next exhibition area.

Next the two videos are described to convey a sense of the subject matter. The first video is footage of a group of men in a trance dance in a circle around a fire, dancing and clapping rhythmically. The other is of a group of women doing the same. In both videos a person can be seen going into trance and being held by members of the group dancing around the fire. Just before going into trance the two people can be seen to tremble violently, collapsing to the ground eventually. In both videos the people in the trance dance move around and around the fire with their feet rhythmically stamping on the ground in the sand. It is this rhythmic movement and clapping that enables them to go into trance. San shamans still enter a state of trance in order to perform tasks such as healing the sick, to travel to other parts to see how their friends and relations are faring and to make rain (Lewis-Williams 2000:6). In the video of the male healer going into trance much the same activity as described below can be seen. Groups of men and groups of women took part in different trance dances.

The second video shows the women doing a trance dance. Apart from the group of women standing around the large fire, there are also children and a male drummer, who is seated on the sand. The women range widely in age: the woman going into trance is of an older age; one woman can be seen with a baby on her back. The children do not participate in the clapping and singing. The drummer drums rhythmically continuously, enhancing the sound of the rhythmic clapping. As with the video

of the male healer going into trance, this video is shot from ground level, with the camera facing upward. At the centre of this video is a large fire; the women stand in a circle around the fire, clapping and singing. The woman goes into trance, moves half way around the fire and moves forwards towards the fire and then backwards away from the fire continually. This echoes the image of the women dancing around a fire in the welcome panel.

The women in the video are spatially connected. They are shown in the same frame throughout the video. All the women standing in a circle around the fire clap in unison and they all sing in what sounds like an ongoing chant, which contributes to the atmosphere of strangeness. The women are all dressed in Western clothing. Some of the women are wearing traditional beads and the woman going into trance is wearing a traditional San headdress. The traditional beadwork and headdress is in juxtaposition to the Western clothes the women are wearing. The wearing of Western clothing serves to bring the San into modernity, whilst taking part in an ancient ritual. This creates both a juxtaposition and a sense of discomfort as there is a disjuncture between the ancient and modernity which is straddled by the San.

The women standing in a circle around the fire mostly remain static with a few of them moving around in a very small area, still remaining in their place in the circle around the fire. They stand close together. The woman who is going into trance moves halfway around the fire and back, backwards and forwards towards and away from the fire. At times, the video focuses on her lower legs, showing her rhythmic steps around the fire as well as her legs trembling, either one or both. She occasionally stumbles. When this happens, either one or two woman close to her step forward to support her and then let her go again when she regains stability. Her whole body shakes from time to time. At one time she sits down, resting her elbows on her knees, looking down with her hands on her head. After a short while she gets up and resumes her moving around the fire in a rhythmic manner. Similarly, some of the other women in the group sit down occasionally, getting up again to join in the activity. Mostly, the woman going into trance does not clap but she does so occasionally in unison with the rest of the group. When she finally goes into trance her whole body starts shaking, which is where the video ends.

The black and white medium of the videos gives them authenticity, as noted above. The videos of trance dancing were shot in black and white making the figures appear to be ghostlike. This otherworldly impression is created by the black and white nature of the video; the angle at which the videos are shot does not change throughout the filming and enhances the sense of mystique of the trance ritual. This effect is further

enhanced through the rhythmic clapping and singing as well as by the greenish tinge of the video. The fact that this video is shown in a small dark room off to the side of the main part of the exhibition, with no interpretation or caption to assist viewers to make sense, increases the sense of mysteriousness of the figures engaged in this trance dance. Stenglin (2004:132) would call this space too bound as the space is so restricted that it causes a smothering, suffocating relationship between itself and its user.

From the perspective of contextualisation, which is a scale that runs from the absence of background to the most fully articulated and detailed background, the video has an absence of background, giving it low modality (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2006:161). The background is black. There are no features such as trees or grass; the scene is without context. The effect of this lack of setting makes it impossible to understand the activity that is portrayed beyond a literal understanding, that of a group of women and men singing and clapping around a fire. What the viewer sees and interprets literally is a group of people dancing around a fire. It is not possible to understand this activity as a trance dance unless one has seen similar footage before, which is unlikely as this is a rare video of trance dance, or one knows enough about the ritual world of the San to understand that this is a trance dance and that the men and woman moving around in a shuffling manner are going into trance. This results in this activity being shrouded in mystery; the San appear to be 'different', beyond interpretation.

The trance dance is tied up with San spirituality and as a consequence is reflective of a discourse of spirituality. The discourse of spirituality, as has been demonstrated, is drawn on in the exhibition to signify common humanity, given the history of how the San have been represented in previous exhibitions. Whilst signifying humanity, which is common to all, this video can also be seen to be making the San appear to be 'different' as a result of the apparent mystique of the representation of trance experience. Whilst the choice to include the video is to show the spirituality of the San, doing a trance dance, the way in which the video was shot make the San appear 'different'. This is in contradiction with the highlighting of the spirituality of the San and places the San instead in a context in which they are seen to be strange, creating a tension for the viewer. In so doing, the humanity of the San is downplayed. The exhibition itself is underpinned by a discourse of transformation. Unity amongst all people is foregrounded. By the San appearing as 'different' in this video, difference is instead foregrounded. Hall (2000:161) argues that ethnographic museums do not simply reflect natural distinctions, but serve to create cultural distinctions. When looking at the representation of the San in these videos, this principle can be applied. The videos inadvertently invoke the cultural difference of the San.

In this section, the use of black and white in documentary film-making has been described, and a description has been given of the trance dance videos, in particular the video of the women doing a trance dance. This was followed by an analysis of the videos. The black and white nature of these documentary videos creates an inadvertent sense of the San being 'different', in so doing, drawing attention to race. In the evolutionary discourse, difference was equated to race. Through the San being depicted as 'different' and a subsequent focus on race, a contradiction with the discourse of transformation found in this part of the exhibition which brings the San ritual into modernity is created. Showing the San in Western clothing brings them into modernity, yet by participating in an ancient ritual a juxtaposition is created. In this case, the mix of old and modern makes the San appear neither one nor the other and thus outside of history. This is a similar pattern to what was on show in the previous exhibition (analysed in chapter 4). The focus of the videos on the trance dances follows the main theme of this exhibition, that of spirituality and foregrounds the discourse of spirituality.

6.17 Final comments

This chapter looks at three displays in the current exhibition. Through the analysis of these displays it is shown that there is a strong discourse of transformation, which is realised through the spiritual and the scientific discourse. Whilst there is a dominant discourse in each of the three displays, vestiges of different discourses are manifest. The discourses exist alongside one another, and together contribute to making meaning. Each discourse feeds into the transformation agenda that informs this exhibition.

Currently, the San remain largely impoverished and marginalised, as has been the case for centuries. This is in contradiction to the way in which the San have been recontextualised in the exhibitions over the last hundred years in which they are first shown naked or near naked to be read as specimens, then in an idealised scene in the diorama and finally, in the way they are shown in the current exhibition in which they are rendered capable with recognition given to their spirituality and their scientific knowledge.

In the first display area the welcome panel and the map of Africa are analysed and discussed. Although the dominant discourse in this part of the exhibition is a discourse of transformation, I have shown some vestiges of representational practices that 'other' the San remain, reminiscent of the display of the San in the 1911 exhibition and later in the diorama. Another display that is discussed is what

has been termed 'the oldest chemistry set'. The dominant discourse manifest in this display is the scientific discourse. The ancient practices of the San have been given agency through the use of the scientific discourse and the scientific manner in which the practices of the San have been framed, for example, through the reference to the San as scientists, i.e. as modern. The second display area creates the feeling of being in a San rock shelter through the construction of a three-dimensional cave-like structure. This display area is looked at in terms of lighting, colour and texture. The concepts of binding and bonding developed by Stenglin (2004) are useful for looking at the way in which visitors to this exhibition are affected by the space.

Finally trance, spirituality and difference are looked at in the analysis of a video on trance dancing in the Kalahari in southern Africa. It is shown how the trance dance is intrinsically tied up with San spirituality and is reflective of a discourse of spirituality. But at the same time the lack of interpretive contrast and dark, disorienting space as well as the way the video was filmed, create an othering effect.

What is key is the notion that, although there are dominant discourses in each of the displays, vestiges of other discourses have remained and exist alongside and in dialogue with one another. The exhibition is an attempt at 'transformation', which has been difficult to achieve in a museum initiated under colonial rule and shaped by apartheid. It is important to note that the interpretation of aspects of this exhibition is dependent on the filters of scientists and academics located in colonial knowledge, institutions and disciplines.

This exhibition is underpinned by a discourse of transformation, which is evidenced in the focus on the rock art of the San which is central to their belief system, and evidence of a rich and complex spiritual and cosmological world. This is in stark contrast to the first two exhibitions in which the San are represented as 'other', 'different' and 'primitive', devoid of any humanity. Power is invested in the San through the use of the Bleek and Lloyd manuscripts which are a record of the rich San belief system and of the centrality of rock art in their lives told by the San and through consulting with and involving the descendants of the San in the conception and mounting of the exhibition; the stories told in the exhibition are told from the perspective of the San. By selecting rock art and not the casts of the San for this exhibition the San are no longer represented in a dehumanised way. The mode of representation of the San reclaims the dignity that colonialism denied the San. The selection of the engraved ochre and the abalone shell containing traces of ochre acknowledges the San as an advanced people capable of generating and understanding symbols and abstraction, which invests the San with the humanity

they were deprived of in the first two exhibitions. The ancient practices of the San are given agency through the scientific manner and scientific discourse in which their practices are framed, in so doing investing power in the San.

The next chapter draws together the main arguments of this research, and argues for the use of the principles of recontextualisation as a way of operationalising 'de-colonisation' in museums.

Chapter 7

Conclusion: envisaging transformation of representation in museums

7.1 Overview

This study has explored a multimodal social semiotic framework for looking at how museum exhibitions refract dominant discourses in society, in particular, the ways in which knowledge and artefacts are contextualised and recontextualised across a period of time. The insights gained here may enable museum professionals to better understand meaning making and representation in museum display and contribute to current debates on representation. More than two decades after the fall of apartheid, museums in South Africa, in spite of heeding the need for transformation, still have a lot of work to do in this regard. The 'Rhodes Must Fall' movement brought back on to the agenda the question of deracialising the country's institutions and public culture (Mbembe 2016). This research could thus contribute to future research on museum display, in particular, with regard to indigenous people and ethnographic displays, especially in previously colonised countries in which colonialism had a deep and profound impact on the way in which indigenous people were viewed, treated and represented. To this end, drawing on the insights of the 'new' museology is useful. It offers a reinterpretation of imperial history and is critical of the racial categories which previously informed the collection of museum objects.

7.2 The new museology and the decolonisation of museums

The 'new' museology that developed in the 1980s was the start of a radical reassessment of the role of museums. Subsequent changes in museology have focused attention on the right to speak for 'others', which traditionally museums have done since their inception and, in particular, during the colonial era. By locating indigenous people as 'uncivilised' and from a 'prehistoric' past, European colonisers were able to justify colonisation. As has been shown, representation in museums was a key part of establishing and authorising narratives and founding myths.

As has been noted, although the Iziko South African Museum is a natural history museum, it also houses ethnographic collections and displays. Wonisch (2017) argues that ethnological museums are inseparably linked to Eurocentrism and

colonialism, and that post-colonial criticism of museums is not only levelled against the appropriation and submission of bodies and objects of other cultures, but starts with the concepts upon which museums as institutions are founded. She suggests that the decolonisation of ethnological museums will involve profound structural changes given the 'colonial entanglement' inscribed in their discipline, collections and in the history of the museum. The violence of racism, suppression and denial of humanity of colonialism needs to be addressed with openness and self-reflection when thinking about the decolonisation of museums and how this could be done within the contexts of collections held in different museums, their displays and their respective histories.

This research has explored what a decolonised display could look like. Decolonisation entails a change which includes not speaking for indigenous people and the ways in which they are located. I would like to think museums exhibitions can be redeemed from their legacy of racism, classism and sexism, despite a history deeply implicated in an imperial social order. I have proposed applying the three principles of recontextualisation to the reform of museums so that the exclusions of the past can be overcome and their democratic vocations realised. This is the challenge for museums in South Africa at this time with the call for the decolonising of institutions and of knowledge. Both in the first exhibition and in the diorama, the San were 'disremembered', a phrase used by Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (2009). Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2015) asks how colonised people can re-launch themselves from the world of 'non-being' into the world of 'being' and also how they can re-capture their lost land, power, history, being and language.

Through transformation and decolonisation of museum practice, policy and display the colonised can be 're-remembered'. 'Re-remembering' will aid in the reclaiming of indigenous knowledge as argued by Onciul (2015). By valuing the deep spiritual world and knowledge, the current San exhibition in part reflects some of their rich history. This exhibition goes some way to showing how, albeit in a limited way, colonised people can re-launch themselves. Heritage sites and museums are important points of entry for indigenous people's voices to be heard as they have the ability to validate identities, histories, culture and society. Collaborative exhibits (with curators and indigenous people working together) can counter the colonial history and in that way return both voice and agency to the communities that are represented. By showing how the vestiges of the evolutionary discourse are present throughout all three exhibitions, this research has made clear that the issues of race discussed by Erasmus (2008), Soudien (2012), Alexander (2006) and Cloete (2014) remain an integral part of the socio-political context in South Africa. However,

with the mounting of displays that are underpinned by scholarship on African and indigenous knowledge, the educational role of museums could be transformed. Museums would then no longer educate the public about imperialism and the superiority of colonial powers through the way in which indigenous material culture collections of this era denote evolution from 'primitive' to 'evolved'.

Based on scholarship on colonialism and decolonisation as well as on the findings of this research, it can be seen that the principles of decolonisation can be applied and effected in museum display and practice. However, further research is required to make a convincing argument about what decolonisation would look like and how it can be realised effectively and in a scholarly and rigorous way in museums. The next section discusses the principles of recontextualisation which could underlie transformation of representation in museums.

7.3 Envisaging transformation of representation in museums using principles of recontextualisation

It is possible to map a re-imagining of museum display on Bezemer and Kress' (2008) principles of recontextualisation in order to see what forms transformation in museums displays could take. Selection, arrangement and social relations are discussed, showing how these principles could be applied in a transformed museum display. In this mapping of re-imagined museum displays, this research contributes to both the fields of multimodal social semiotics and museum practice.

7.3.1 Selection and transformation

Objects are selected for particular exhibitions by museum professionals who make the selection of *what* to display and *how* to display the artefacts they have selected. Selection can thus point to the construction of the 'other' (Lindstrand and Insulander 2012:42). This research has shown how the selection of the San casts for display in the first exhibition and in the diorama is a case in point. In the first exhibition the casts were selected to represent a race that was 'going extinct'. The dominant discourse underpinning this representation was an evolutionary discourse as evidenced in the quest to gather and capture data on the San in the 'interest of science'. The selection of the casts in the second exhibition, the diorama, aimed to illustrate a hunting and gathering way of life, which was underpinned by an ecological discourse. The selection of materials by museum professionals thus makes it possible to show how the material culture of indigenous people in colonised countries was used to confirm theories of the time such as evolution.

In reflecting on 'selection' as a semiotic activity, consideration of the underlying classification system is crucial. Classification is at the core of museum practice with regard to collections and display. It has been shown in this research how classification made it possible to represent the San as of a different race group. Through extracting ethnographic objects from former classifications, museums could begin to decolonise their collections. By re-interpreting colonial era these objects it is possible to free them from their colonial context and to represent ethnographic objects and indigenous knowledge in a way that is mindful of the value and meaning of the objects, and does not stereotype. In this view there is no need to destroy ethnographic collections, rather they need a new identification; they need to be recontextualised and re-imagined. This can be done partly through reflecting on the way in which classification systems underpin discourse and representation. Another way that museums can reshape their colonial heritage in display is by paying more attention to the biography of an object before it enters the museum and so negating its status of a 'specimen'. Thus, decolonising collections is partly a process through which an ethnographic object is extracted from a former classification which maintained this object in a de facto colonised status.

I have argued that, in a museum context, museum professionals choose, through selection, what will be communicated through display and that choice is always shaped by power (Kress 2010:28). Museums are commonly viewed as expert bodies that hold truths on culture, heritage and the past. Because museums are widely recognised as places of specialised knowledge, what is represented in a museum is taken 'on trust to be authentic' (Davison 1991:97). As authorities on the past, museums are vested with special privileges to authorise histories. They provide platforms for representations that affect and reflect the society that created them and consequently have social, political and legal influence over how a community is viewed and treated (Onciul 2015:3,4). This makes museums powerful vehicles for the representation of different ideologies. However, conversely, museums can be powerful vehicles for debunking commonly held views and ideologies. Museums need not be 'certifiers of taste and definers of culture' and need not set up schemes that classify and relate cultural identities' but could have an alternative future for museums that 'involves questioning their own claims about identity and engaging in serious and systematic dialogue with other points of view' (Karp 1992:32).

What, for example, would be the ethically correct thing to do with the San casts in the future – destroy them, archive them or return them to their communities? (Wild 2018). Currently the casts are stored in a space close to the diorama that has been

closed off the public. Any of these three suggestions Wild makes for dealing with the future of the casts could be construed as acts of 'decolonisation'.

As has been discussed, museum collections and displays were used to justify European colonial powers' aggression and dominance over colonised people. Stories that are told achieve social, cultural and political goals (Kress 2010:59). The collection of cultural material of indigenous people reinforced colonial power relationships and narratives, or stories, of ownership of indigenous people and justified colonial practice by dehumanising indigenous colonised people. A re-imagined transformed exhibition would take into account current discourses, views and debate as well as how these discourses could be realised in an exhibition that opens up debate rather than normalises one view.

7.3.2 Reconsidering arrangement and foregrounding

The second principle of recontextualisation involves *arrangement* of semiotic material and includes consideration of foregrounding and backgrounding; where foregrounding entails the assigning of salience (Bezemer and Kress 2008:185–186). In the first two exhibitions, the museum professionals foregrounded the knowledge contained within the newly founded discipline of anthropology, which at this time had at its centre the racial classification of people, with its focus on physical characteristics.

In the diorama, mounted in mid-twentieth century, the San were depicted in the twilight zone referred to by Bennett as somewhere between nature and culture. The most celebrated instance of this twilight zone was that of Sara Baartman (discussed in chapter 4) whose physiology was interpreted as a sign of separate development (Bennett 1998:90). In the first exhibition and in the diorama it is the steotopygia of the San women that was foregrounded, in so doing, representing the racist ideology of the coloniser and the apartheid era regime. In a transformed exhibition it would be indigenous knowledge that is perhaps foregrounded, or at least put into dialogue with other forms of knowledge, and the binary of Western and indigenous knowledge blurred or questioned.

An example can be found in the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History. This museum considered the decolonisation of ethnographic documentation, acknowledging that objects in ethnographic collections were documented through the application of scientific methods prevalent in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and that information about objects excluded the validity of those that produced them (Turner 2015:660). It is essential to build (digital) collections in

consultation with indigenous communities in order to safeguard indigenous interests. The history of how indigenous items came into cultural heritage institutions is often contentious as the material was often appropriated in the colonial period when indigenous communities had little control over what was collected (Chisa and Hoskins 2015:56, 57).

When considering the decolonisation of museum display, the assigning of salience to particular knowledges is critical. In South Africa the critique is mainly focused on whose knowledge is at the centre of the curriculum. In the instance of the Iziko South African Museum, this research has shown that the knowledge at the centre of the first two exhibitions is that of the coloniser. In the current exhibition, the consultative process with descendants of the San, as well as the use of San knowledge, does in part assign salience to San knowledge. The exhibition also, however, includes the knowledge of Western scientists such as the research, for example, on the dating and analysis done on the 100 000-year-old ochre found at Blombos Cave. The scientist who worked on the construction of this exhibition acknowledges the knowledge that was used to extract the ochre and process it for use, calling the San 'scientists'. In so doing, he is recognising the scientific knowledge of the San. A further example of the foregrounding of scientific knowledge can be seen in the use of terminology such as 'canid ulna', 'cortical quartzite flake' and 'broken bovid vertebra'. The manner in which this part of the exhibition is presented assigns salience to San knowledge and to San culture as the scientific discourse is deemed to represent what is definitive. This is thus Western knowledge building on and giving credence to the indigenous knowledge of the San.

Exhibitions have the ability to change public perception and are thus powerful tools for societal change. The current exhibition aimed to reframe the identity of the San, by focusing on the rich spiritual world of the San and the way in which this is reflected in their rock art and rituals such as the trance dance. By exhibiting rock art panels in a museum gallery during colonialism and apartheid devoid of context there could be no deeper understanding of the meaning of rock art. It was possible to view rock art as something created by a group that is 'separate' and 'different'. By placing rock art within a context and assigning salience to the richness and value of rock art in the written text, and especially by using quotations in /Xam and in English that came from the San, it became possible to understand rock art as not being produced by a group that is 'separate' and inferior. Similarly, by the creation of the cave-like structure covered with rock art images in the current exhibition, the context in which rock art was created, seen and used can be understood. As museums teach

through their exhibitions, what is being shown and taught in this exhibition about precolonial art, spirituality and knowledge is seen to have value and to be important. This ties in with the issue at the heart of the call for the decolonisation that curricula should not only include and value Western knowledge. Placing San knowledge at the centre of the exhibition as well as precolonial history, fulfils some of the criteria of a decolonised curriculum.

In South Africa, some two decades into democracy, further societal changes are still needed. Museum display can contribute to realising a change in public perception and in so doing contribute to societal change. As powerful as the impact of colonialism was on the way the San were represented, decolonised displays can be equally powerful in communicating a different message that can reclaim indigenous knowledge.

7.3.3 Re-defining social relations

The third principle of recontextualisation, social relations, entails the positioning of the represented participant in relation to the viewer. As discussed, in the first two exhibitions the San were positioned in such a way that their physical characteristics were foregrounded, which set the viewer up to become the voyeur – the outsider looking in on people who were positioned as 'different' and reified in time and place. In these exhibitions the San were also literally 'imprisoned' in glass-fronted showcases, positioning them in relation to the viewer as 'other'. In the first exhibition they were completely dehumanised, exhibited mainly naked, devoid of context or name, whilst in the diorama they were imprisoned in a timeless camp scene. In both instances they were imprisoned in a 'racial' category through the focus on their physical characteristics emphasised by their naked- or near-naked state. In a decolonised display it would be the previously colonised people whose knowledge would be foregrounded, and they would not be framed in a way that excludes their material culture and knowledge. The viewer would thus be positioned differently to the represented participants, with a different focus, given the acknowledgement of indigenous knowledge and values in such a re-imagined display.

This research has shown how complex the discourses around the representation of the San are, and that the resulting social relations between the viewer and the represented participant are also complex, shifting and ambiguous. The evolutionary discourse, for instance, realised through selection and classification, identifies the San as 'living fossils' and as 'racially different'. The evolutionary view held that people were at different points of the evolutionary scale and that the San were 'primitive'.

Whilst an evolutionary discourse clearly focuses on 'difference', an ecological discourse encompasses the notion that San lived in close harmony with nature given their hunter-gatherer lifestyle and their ecological knowledge (Van Vuuren 2009:558). This trope is carried through in the Eden myth which encompasses the view that the San were 'remnants of a past era', living in harmony with nature and 'unspoiled by civilisation' (Davison 2001:6). The complexity of discourses where both 'utopian' and 'primitive' views of the San exist side by side positions the viewer in conflicting and dialogic ways. In a re-imagined exhibition, the contradictions in the discourses could be overtly highlighted in order to make viewers question these discourses and begin to critically engage them and with broader issues of representation. As has been shown, considering recontextualisation as transformed selection, reconsidered arrangement and redefined social relations makes it possible to re-imagine a transformed and decolonised display.

7.4 Final comments

In order to understand the ideological workings of representation in museums, it was useful to employ a social semiotic approach to show how the semiotic choices refracted prevailing ideologies as well as the complexity of discourses of the different eras. The contribution this research makes includes bringing multimodal social semiotics to 'lost texts' and 'lost people'. As has been shown, the San were exterminated en masse, and what remained – aside from those that survived being killed, dying of starvation and being displaced – were the casts, which remained on public view, acting as representations of a 'lost people'. It is these representations of the San that were viewed by the public for all this time, which foregrounded and gave salience to 'difference' and race. The use of a multimodal social semiotic framework makes it possible to understand how the San, the 'lost people', were represented over time, highlighting that this representation did not reflect the conditions in which they lived at the time. This has been done through analysis of historical texts, photographs taken at this time, comparative texts and events surrounding these, such as the statue of Sara Baartman at the University of Cape Town.

There are examples of museums in Cape Town that have engaged with issues of representation and colonisation in complex and sophisticated ways . Two examples of such museums are the Slave Lodge and the District Six Museum. The Slave Lodge was previously the South African Cultural History Museum, which held colonial era collections and exhibited colonial era material culture items of the European settlers. Although the museum still exhibits some of these artefacts, the

main exhibition is on slavery and it also hosts temporary exhibitions on socially relevant issues. The building in which this museum is housed was built as a slave lodge in 1679 by the Dutch East India Company. It housed up to 9 000 slaves between 1679 and 1811 (https://www.iziko.org.za/static/page/the-history-of-the-building). A recent exhibition entitled *My name is Februarie: identities rooted in slavery* aimed to memorialise the forgotten history of the South African slave trade. The exhibition was launched to highlight this important aspect of the city's past. The museum, its permanent exhibition on slaves and temporary exhibitions such as the one above recovers the voice and the history of the slaves. Similarly, the District Six Museum, established in 1994, gives back the voice and the history of the people of District Six who were forcibly removed by the apartheid government. District Six was a mixed community of freed slaves, merchants, artisans, labourers and emigrants, which was declared a white area by the Group Areas Act of 1950 (http://www.districtsix.co.za/). This museum is a memorial to this community and works with the memories of the District Six experience and forced removals more generally. The floor of the museum is covered with a map of District Six, with hand-written notes of former inhabitants which indicate where their houses were. Artefacts in the museum include old traffic signs, exhibits of historical moments from the lives of families and exhibits of the demolition of the area. The goal of the museum is to join people into a community where there is respect for dignity, identity and the co-existence of diversity. The history of the former inhabitants is told through the collections consisting of artefacts donated by them, making this an excellent example of collaborative curatorship.

As discussed, artefacts are always recontextualised. Key to museum practice is that artefacts are always removed from their place of origin and then moved to museum collections where they are classified and, if selected for exhibition, put on display. The meaning of artefacts are changed in this process which has significant implications, in particular with regard to the recontextualisation of artefacts. A social semiotic multimodal framework is apt for the site of the study and made it possible to answer the research question that deals with the way in which recontextualisation refracts and constructs the San.

Using a multimodal social semiotic framework enabled an investigation of exhibitions that focused on representation in a colonial context. This multimodal social semiotic framework was refined in the light of other disciplines such as postcolonialism which assisted with the analysis of these exhibitions which a purely multimodal social semiotic framework could not do.

By refining this framework by incorporating postcolonialism it has developed the

framework, thereby contributing to this field in a way that has not been done before. This is especially apt in museum studies and specifically for colonial era museums which house and display colonial collections. It was necessary to use multimodal social semiotic framework do this study. By drawing on discourse analysis, depth was added which makes this study a unique contribution to the field of museum studies.

The use of a multimodal social semiotic framework made it possible to analyse the exhibitions that form the focus of this study. The analysis of the exhibitions and the use of texts on colonialism and postcolonialism showed both the influence of colonialism on museums established during the colonial era, their collection and classification practices as well as their display practices. It has also made it possible to explore what a decolonised display could look like and to pose questions that suggest ways in which decolonial thinking could be brought to representation in museums, using the principles of recontextualisation.

The study of museums from a social semiotic perspective is significant from a theoretical perspective as museums play an important role in the colonial period from different angles.

This study addresses on that tends to be overlooked because of the complex nature of such a study. It has filled an existing gap in the literature and much needed discussion on the role of museums on society.

The following kinds of questions suggest ways in which decolonial thinking could be brought to representation in museums, using the principles of recontextualisation.

- What needs to be considered when deciding what to include or exclude in museum display?
- Given that classification systems used in museums are a basis for selection, how can the selection of materials for display be questioned through interrogating the underlying systems and assumptions of classification?
- How can different knowledges be selected to foreground indigenous knowledge when representing indigenous people in display?
- How can salience be assigned to different knowledges, in so doing backgrounding or at least creating a dialogue with Western knowledge in museum display?

In sum, this research is significant because it operationalises a social semiotic multimodal framework, drawing in particular on Bezemer and Kress' (2008) three rhetorical principles: selection, arrangement and social relations, to argue that varied discourses are in dialogue in museum displays. The research employs a multimodal

approach to lost people and texts, bringing together the two in a unique way. The value of the research lies in contributing to an understanding of museum practice over time with regard to display and, by interrogating these exhibitions within a socio-political context. Usefully, this research proposes ways in which decolonial thinking can be brought to representation in museums.

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